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SHOP STEWARDS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: THE INFLUENCE OF OCCUPATION, GENDER AND DEPARTMENT ON UNION ACTIVISM

by Elizabeth Hilda Lawrence, BA, MPhil, PGCE

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SHOP STEWARDS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: THE INFLUENCE OF OCCUPATION, GENDER AND DEPARTMENT ON UNION ACTIVISM.

by Elizabeth Lawrence

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the influence of gender, department and occupation on union activism among shop stewards in local government, based on research in the Sheffield Local Government branch of NALGO. This research was undertaken to identify factors encouraging and discouraging union office-holding, including those related to shop steward turnover.

The research, based on questionnaire and semi-structured interview studies and literature searches, indicates that occupational position and job content, including departmental culture, are the most significant determinants of levels of union activism. This occurs through autonomy at work and the development of skills and self-confidence in higher occupational positions, which facilitate union activism, and through the growth of awareness of social issues, which provides a motivation for union involvement. This latter process occurs especially in departments such as Family and Community Services and Housing.

The influence of department is significant in relation to job content and attitudes towards the union. The influence of gender often cannot be separated from the influence of occupation, given the extent to which occupational segregation occurs along gender lines. Nonetheless the findings suggest that gender roles more often influence union activism indirectly via occupational position, where women's lower occupational position presents obstacles to the holding of union office because of practical difficulties in taking time off for union work, than they do directly via socialization or domestic responsibilities.

Women's position in many unions, including NALGO, underwent substantial changes in the 1980s, partly as a result of feminism. Nonetheless obstacles to union office-holding remained for women, largely because of occupational position, which led to under-representation of women as shop stewards. This research concludes that women's under-representation in union office-holding has its root causes in occupational segregation.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Research Problem

This study is concerned with exploring the influence of three inter-related variables on union activism. The form of union activism being studied in this project is union office-holding at shop steward and branch officer level, using Sheffield NALGO as a case study. The variables being studied are occupation, gender and department. These variables are inter-related in a number of ways. Gender roles influence position in the occupational structure particularly in Local Government, which forms the context of this study, where there is to a considerable degree a credentialist employment structure in which initial entry level and, to a lesser degree, promotion is determined by the possession of formal qualifications. The influence, however, is not purely one-way. Occupational experience can alter women's and men's understanding and performance of their gender roles, as can union activism. The departmental factor inter-relates with both the occupational and the gender dimensions, inasmuch as different departments have different proportions of higher and lower graded posts and of male and female staff. The predominantly male departments studied had a higher proportion of higher graded posts. Thus when examining women's and men's position in NALGO it is important to look not only at the influence of gender roles, but also the influence of occupational and departmental situation.

The research is based upon a study of shop stewards and union officers in the Sheffield Local Government Branch of NALGO. The fieldwork, carried out between 1987 and 1990 involved a questionnaire study of the shop steward population, interviews with branch officers and shop stewards and a study of the branch records of shop stewards. In the Sheffield NALGO Local Government Branch the membership was split approximately 50/50 between men and women, but about two-thirds of the shop stewards were men. It thus offered an opportunity to investigate the widely-occuring phenomenon of under-representation of women in union office-holding.

This is an issue which was debated in many sections of the trade union movement in the 1980s, following the adoption by many unions in the 1970s of policies on women's rights and the establishment or re-activation of women's rights or equal rights committees. There was an increasing recognition by trade unionists of the necessity for adequate representation of women in union office-holding if policies on women's rights were to become effective. This encouraged several unions, including NALGO, to conduct surveys of women's representation and levels of office-holding and to seek to promote women's participation. My own interest in the research area of gender and unions developed both from teaching industrial sociology and women's studies, from involvement in trades council women's sub-committees in Newcastle and Sheffield, and from personal experience of office-holding in NATFHE (National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher

Education), including three years as a member of NATFHE's national women's rights panel.

Any workable model of union participation has to examine both those factors which motivate and enable people to participate and hold office in unions and also obstacles and disincentives to participation. It is, for instance, inaccurate to assume that if women were simply freed of childcare or other domestic responsibilities that this would necessarily lead to increased levels of union activism. While the significance of such barriers should not be under-estimated, women's union participation cannot be explained only in terms of obstacles to participation arising from women's gender role, but also in terms of factors such as occupational role and departmental culture. Moreover it should not be assumed that the feminine gender role is always a demotivating factor in terms of union activism. While certain forms of union militancy may ostensibly conflict with traditional forms of femininity, for some informants in the research project, such as the nursery nurses who became shop stewards, it was precisely the contradictions of the feminine gender role which were one of the motivating forces for union activism. Conversely the masculine gender role sometimes assisted male shop stewards to be promoted in the workplace and hence removed from union office-holding. It is too often ignored in industrial sociology literature that male workers have gender roles, which may influence many aspects of work behaviour including union activism. This study attempts to contribute to remedying this imbalance.

Since this research project is concerned with three inter-related factors the question obviously arises of their relative significance. It is important to raise this question to avoid a reductionist approach to gender roles and to avoid conflating occupational status and gender role. While they influence each other they are not the same. Union activism is a form of voluntary activity in the explanation of which structural factors are important, but attention also has to be paid to the extent to which occupational and gender roles can be changed and negotiated. It is therefore important to emphasise the inter-acting influence of these three factors.

1.2 The Structure of the Thesis

This introductory chapter outlines the research problem to be investigated. Chapter 2 discusses the background to the research, situating it firstly in relation to other academic studies, covering union participation, gender and unions, gender and employment, white-collar unionism and shop stewards' committees; secondly in the context of the Sheffield employment market and labour movement and the history of the Sheffield NALGO Local Government Branch; and thirdly in the context of recent developments in the trade union movement concerning women's rights, NALGO's first national strike in 1989 and union mergers.

Chapter 3 covers the design of the research project, the reasons for the choice of the Sheffield NALGO Local Government Branch as the subject for the study, and the process of negotiating access and carrying out various stages of the research, which were a questionnaire survey, interviews and a study of branch records. It also contains an assessment of the strengths and limitations of the data.

The main reporting of the research findings is contained in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7. It is interwoven with references to relevant literature in order to situate it more clearly in its academic and theoretical context. Chapter 4 discusses the material concerning occupational position, starting with an account of the occupational structure in Local Government and NALGO's involvement in its creation and re-negotiation. The second part of chapter 4 discusses the relationship between occupation and job grade and union office-holding. Chapters 5 and 6 focus on gender, addressing in chapter 5 issues of women's and men's representation in union office-holding, and in chapter 6 the way union policy issues concerning gender were addressed by the branch and by male and female shop stewards and officers. Chapter 7 examines the influence of the departmental factor on union office-holding. In a large branch, such as the Sheffield Local Government Branch of NALGO, shop stewards' committees in different departments possess their own distinct organisational and union cultures and histories of union organisation, to some degree in some cases like branches within a branch. This is an under-researched area in sociological and industrial relations studies of shop steward

organisation. The first part of Chapter 7 discusses how departments can be grouped for purposes of analysis in terms of gender balance, occupational and grade structure, work content or history of union organisation. Again these factors are inter-related. The second part of Chapter 7 discusses the departmental structures and cultures and the third part looks at the influence of department on union activism. The conclusion draws together the discussions at the end of chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the relative significance of each factor and discusses the policy implications of the research for trade unions concerned with promoting union participation and for academic researchers concerned with studying union activism.

CHAPTER 2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH: THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

2.1 Introduction

The first part of this chapter will situate the research project in relation to other relevant academic studies. It will therefore examine studies and theoretical literature on union participation and office-holding; on gender and trade unions; gender and employment; white-collar unionism; and the operation of shop stewards committees. This literature will be discussed particularly with reference to models and explanations of union participation and sociological approaches to gender roles and gender differences.

The second part of this chapter will cover the Sheffield context of the research; it discusses the implications of changes in the Sheffield labour market; the Sheffield labour movement; the positive action research project carried out on Council employment in Sheffield in 1984; the history of the Sheffield NALGO Local Government Branch; a major industrial dispute over the introduction of new technology in 1984 which the Sheffield NALGO branch was involved in; and the Branch and Council responses to rate-capping and the introduction of the poll tax.

The third part of the chapter considers developments in the wider trade union movement and in NALGO nationally, as they impact upon the issues being studied in the research project. It discusses changes in trade

union policies on women's rights; levels of women's participation and representation in the trade union movement; NALGO's first national strike of 1989; and the future of NALGO in the context of proposed union mergers. This background material is essential to the interpretation of research findings and the analysis of the theoretical issues discussed in the introduction to the thesis.

2.2 Relation to Other Academic Studies

2.2.a Union Participation and Office-holding

In looking at union participation and office-holding I intend first to examine some of the more common explanations of union participation and office-holding and indicate how they relate to the Sheffield NALGO Local Government Branch. I shall then discuss some studies of the role of the shop steward.

Studies of union participation often tend to focus on a number of quantifiable indices of participation, such as attending meetings, voting in union elections, filing grievances, reading union literature and holding union office (Fonow 1977, Anderson 1979, Fosh 1981). There is no common definition of what is meant by union participation, which creates difficulties in studying union participation, and indeed the opportunities for participation available to members vary with the structure of the particular union.

This study focuses on union office-holding at the shop steward and local branch officer level. While office-holding is only one aspect of participation, it is a very important dimension, in terms both of the degree of individual commitment involved and the operation of trade unions as collective organisations. Moreover in large formal unions like NALGO office-holding is the entry to many forms of participation. While ordinary members can attend constituency meetings, annual general meetings, special general meetings and serve on various sub-committees, to develop a 'career' as an activist it is necessary to take on union office. This is because much of the important decision-making takes place at the regular monthly meetings of the branch executive, and the various sub-committees of the executive, as well as the departmental shop stewards' committees (Ursell, Nicholson and Blyton 1981).

Much literature on union participation (Dean 1954, Form and Danserau 1957, Tannenbaum and Kahn 1958, Spinrad 1960) emphasises the importance of work involvement as a factor motivating union participation. Commitment to work and the recognition of work as a central life interest is seen as encouraging union activism, because unions are organisations based on the workplace and so much of union activity is focused around issues concerned with working life. This approach appears especially relevant in the case of NALGO members, both in terms of the history of the union and the role of NALGO in creating the profession of local government officer (Spoor 1967) and in terms of NALGO campaigns in the 1980s and early 1990s, which focused on the theme of defending services and opposing cuts in public expenditure.

For instance in the local elections of 3 May 1990 NALGO called on the electorate to vote against the poll tax on the grounds that it would lead to a reduction in public services. The **commitment to work** factor may fit particularly well too in the case of a trade union like NALGO which was originally set up as a professional body for whose early national officers trade unionism was, in the words of a frequently-cited quotation, "nausea" (Spoor 1967). Thus the concept of commitment to work and indeed of a professional orientation to work is important in explaining the history of NALGO. These issues are explored further in section 2.2.d of this chapter.

If we pose the question of how does the commitment to work factor operate for workers at different levels of the occupational hierarchy, e.g. the clerical workers compared to senior officers, we can see that at some levels commitment to work and advancement in the job may mean an end to union activism, given the conflicting demands on individuals' time from both their job and their union work. There is also the complex relationship between union activism and promotion prospects. For some union office-holders union activism is felt to be a threat to career prospects, while for others the increased visibility to management which occurs as a result of union involvement can improve chances of promotion. It cannot therefore be assumed unproblematically that commitment to work is necessarily reflected in increased union activism.

There is also the question of how well this theory applies in the case of white-collar workers. Some of the literature which explains union

participation in terms of work involvement is clearly theorising based on the experience of an aristocracy of labour (Lipset, Trow and Coleman 1956). Several studies of union participation do explore variations according to skill/job status, gender and white- or blue-collar status. (Dubin 1973, Anderson 1979, Blyton, Nicholson and Ursell 1981, Davis 1981, Griffin 1981, Nicholson, Ursell and Blyton 1981). Variations in job status are generally found to be more significant than the blue-collar/white-collar split or gender differences (Dean 1954), lending support to the view that commitment to work is a major factor motivating individuals towards union activism.

One of the explanatory difficulties with the commitment to work theories of union participation is that different writers may be discussing different forms or dimensions of work commitment. These can cover areas such as job satisfaction, solidaristic or bureaucratic orientations to work, adherence to the protestant work ethic or even a negative or dissatisfied response to work. In the case of many public sector workers and other workers in service industries there is often a conflict between professional standards and bureaucratic authority and/or limits in public expenditure. Rose (1985) in his discussion of the work ethic suggests that adherence to it may be a form of occupational self-interest among white-collar public-sector trade unionists. Such a conflict between commitment to the job and the limitations of the organisational structure can produce either psychological withdrawal and non-participation or a radical and critical

form of participation. This type of response is perhaps best seen in groups such as social workers (Joyce, Corrigan and Hayes 1988).

Another structural approach to union participation is to examine the **size of the workplace**. Daniel and Millward (1983) argue that the size of the organisation is the single biggest determinant of the nature of the industrial relations at work and that the strongest and most formal union organisation tends to arise in the largest workplaces. Clearly such a union structure offers wider opportunities for participation. This approach in so far as it offers an explanation of the motivation to participate obviously refers back to broader sociological explanations of the origins of various forms of class consciousness. It is clearly worth considering in relation to the study of a branch like the Sheffield NALGO Local Government branch, with around 7000 members in nineteen departments, which has well established procedural agreements and a highly-formalised structure of union organization and collective bargaining.

So far the discussion has covered structural approaches to union participation. There are also a number of influential social action approaches. One such approach focuses upon a **commitment to collectivism**. Fosh (1975, 1981) argues that in her study of blue-collar workers in Sheffield there was no evidence of any strong attachment or commitment to work, and that the main distinguishing factor between active and inactive union members was the presence or absence of a commitment to collectivism. This commitment to collectivism was

expressed in a belief in the effectiveness of collective action as a motive for union activism and a greater readiness to take industrial action, than that held by non-active members. Politically this commitment to collectivism took the form of reformist labourism.

Another social action approach is to explain union participation in terms of a general tendency to participate in voluntary organisations (Miller and Stockton 1957, Hagburg 1966). This approach became popular in the USA in the McCarthyite period when industrial relations scholars were concerned to portray union office-holders as respectable citizens and pillars of the community rather than marxist subversives. While there is some evidence that supports this view, it is rather less substantial than the evidence for the commitment to work explanation.

While union participation and office-holding should in general be studied as a form of voluntary activity it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the majority of union office-holders start off as reluctant office-holders, often 'volunteered' by others (Nicholson 1976). In my view this raises a difficulty with explanations of union participation and office-holding which focus on individual characteristics. Sometimes the only factor differentiating a union office-holder from a non office-holder may have been attendance at a particular meeting at which elections took place or lesser resistance to pressures from workmates. Moore's (1980) study of the motivation to be a shop steward advances eight possible hypotheses to explain a willingness to be a shop steward, of which three, the 'responsible person', the 'politically committed

individual' and the 'social worker', may be of relevance to my study. Moore finds some evidence in his research only for the 'responsible person' hypothesis. This view is to some extent supported by Dean (1954), when she writes:-

"it is the feeling of personal identification and responsibility that promotes actual participation" (p 58)

The hypotheses of the 'politically committed individual' and the 'social worker' will be explored in Chapter 7 (3b). The 'social worker' hypothesis is particularly interesting in the case of shop stewards who are by profession social workers.

Existing academic literature on shop stewards deals with a number of areas concerning lay union office-holding, such as motivation to hold union office, attitudes of shop stewards, the distinction between activism and militancy, views of the role of shop steward and the role strain and stresses experienced by shop stewards. Some writers have drawn connections between the motivation to be a shop steward (Chinoy 1965, Sayles and Strauss 1967, Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel 1979, Moore 1980) and the view of the shop steward role. These approaches usually make a distinction in terms of political motivation, for instance leaders and democrats (Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel 1979) and social leaders, active unionists or self-seekers (Sayles and Strauss 1967) and accidental, ideological and ambitious local union leaders (Chinoy 1965). This connection between motivation to be a shop steward and view of the shop steward role is helpful, both in terms of explaining the subjective

factors in union office-holding and in recognising that not all shop stewards carry out the same responsibilities or have the same view of the proper role of the shop steward. The shop stewards I interviewed indicated that some shop stewards took on a negotiating role, while others focused more on a 'casework' approach, which consisted of giving advice and information to constituents, often over the telephone. This latter group were referred to by one informant as "telephone shop stewards".

In developing a theory of union participation it is necessary to consider both barriers to participation and reasons for participation. There is a danger of an implicit assumption that union members ought to participate which researchers may acquire either from the union activists with whom they carry out their research or from their own personal beliefs and union activism. Literature on union participation can approach the explanation of union participation either by examining factors which motivate and encourage participation or by examining barriers to participation. It is noteworthy that the most influential explanations of women's union participation (Wertheimer and Nelson 1975) have focused on **barriers to participation**, while theories of men's union participation or of union participation in general have focused on **reasons for participation**. The significance of this will be explored in the next section.

Union participation and office-holding is a form of **voluntary activity** (Nicholson, Ursell and Blyton 1981) and so any adequate theory of union

participation has to include reasons for participation, rather than assuming that workers will automatically become active in trade unions. Participation in voluntary organisations has generally attracted less study than participation in work organisations. Some useful observations on voluntary organisations by Handy (1988) can, however, be applied to the study of trade unions. He notes the presence of the 'servant syndrome' which contributes to the burn-out of volunteers. He writes:-

"The other feature of the servant syndrome is the constant need to respond. You are there to give and to serve, goes the feeling, and there are so many who need what you have to offer. It is a bottomless pit, down which many fall. The loneliness of caring is well documented, as are the cases of 'burn-out' and the depression that comes from a never-ending task. It does no good to self or to others to be always working at the end of one's energies; but how can it be OK to say 'no' when there are no boundaries to the task?" (Handy p 8).

Several of my informants talked of the shop steward "writing a blank cheque" in terms of their time and energy. The role of the shop steward is a role which can become a never-ending task, especially as with length of service as a steward, union representatives may become more aware of the issues they can take up and also receive more requests for help from members. Thus competence in the performance of the shop steward role is likely to increase the workload.

Several authors comment that given the personal costs of activism and office-holding in terms of both the extra work and the stresses involved it is union participation and office-holding which needs to be explained rather than non-activism (Nicholson 1976, Moore 1980). This was indeed

a view shared by some of the shop stewards I interviewed, who made remarks about the thankless nature of the role and the lack of appreciation by members of what the union had achieved for them or the expenditure of work and time required to secure these gains.

One of the perils of union activism for activists is that it can lead towards moralism towards non-activists, often expressed in the form of condemnations of apathy of the general membership, a trend which can also influence academic writings on industrial relations. For union activism to develop there is a need for both the absence of insuperable barriers to participation, and also the presence of effective reasons for participation. As Lipset et al. in Union Democracy (1956) point out much research on union participation contains an implicit assumption that members ought to participate. They write:-

"Instead of asking why men do not attend union meetings (a question which follows on the assumption that they should) we might ask, 'Why do they go when they do, and what kind of rewards are there for attendance?'" (p 262)

The particular relevance of this point in the case of women workers will be discussed in the next section.

2.2.b Gender and Unions

Studies of gender and unions, especially of women and unions, for many years consisted of far more historical studies (Goldmann 1974, Baxandall 1976, Cantor and Laurie 1977, Lewenhak 1977, Soldon, 1978, Breitenbach

1981, Soldon 1985, Boston 1987) than present day studies. Present day academic studies and policy reports have dealt with a number of themes: women's participation in unions (Beynon and Blackburn 1972, Wertheimer and Nelson 1975, Fonow 1977, Harrison 1979, Purcell 1979, Heritage 1983, Cook, Lorwin and Daniels 1984, Baden 1986, Till-Retz 1986, Cobble 1990); under-representation of women in union leadership (Cook 1968, Dewey 1971, Bergquist 1974, Krebs 1975, Fryer, Fairclough and Manson 1978, Hardman 1984, Rees 1990); women union leaders (Abicht 1976, Ledgerwood 1980, Izraeli 1984, Walton 1985, Roby and Uttal 1988, Heery and Kelly 1988a, 1988b, 1989, Ledwith, Colgan, Joyce and Hayes 1990); and the responsiveness of union structures and policies to women's interests (Lorwin 1979, Coote and Kellner 1980, Leman 1980, Ellis 1981, Cunnison 1983, Milkman 1985, Burton 1987, Ellis 1988, Feldberg 1989, Cockburn 1991, Faue 1991). In this section the major research literature in the field so far will be discussed under the following headings:-

(i) Approaches to the study of women's union participation

(ii) Under-representation of women in union leadership

(iii) Women union leaders

(iv) Responsiveness of union structures and policies to women's interests.

2.2.b (i) Approaches to the study of women's union participation

Lipset, Trow and Coleman's question "Why do they go when they do, and what kind of rewards are there for attendance?" (Lipset, Trow and

Coleman 1956) is a particularly relevant question in the case of women union members, both because in the past and still to some extent in the present day trade unions have often not paid sufficient attention to the demands and needs of women members (Lewenhak 1977, Soldon 1978, Boston 1987, Colling and Dickens 1989), and because of many women's double work-load carrying out both paid work in employment and unpaid work in the home, which makes it difficult for them to take on a third set of tasks and responsibilities as a union office-holder.

The 1972 study by Beynon and Blackburn on men's and women's perceptions of work (Beynon and Blackburn 1972) indicated two major factors affecting women's union involvement. One was the significance of the split between full-time and part-time working, with part-time workers being less involved in the union. The other major factor was the prejudices of male shop stewards who considered women uninterested in unions and often only to be working for pin money. In terms of Wertheimer and Nelson's (1975) study these women experienced both **work-related and union-related barriers to participation.**

Wertheimer and Nelson's 1975 study of women's participation in New York City locals covering several industries is still the classic study of women trade unionists, referred to by most subsequent researchers. At the time its identification of three groups of barriers to participation, **work-related, union-related and cultural-societal-personal,** provided a useful framework for the study of the position of women in trade unions. Much subsequent research has confirmed the importance of the various

barriers to participation they identify. For instance studies concerning the under-representation of women in unions often show that it is particularly women in low-status, low-paid jobs who are under-represented in union office-holding (see section ii), reinforcing the significance of the work-related group of barriers to participation. Research on women union office-holders (see section iii) has indicated that a large number of them are single and do not have young children, and in this respect has confirmed the significance of the cultural-societal-personal category. Discussion of how unions can become more responsive to women's concerns and interests (see section iv) shows that the union-related category is still relevant.

Following the influential work of Wertheimer and Nelson (1975), other studies of women's union participation have started with the examination of barriers to participation. The theoretical problem I find with this approach is that the removal of obstacles or barriers to participation does not of itself provide any positive reasons for participation. For instance the creation of extra leisure time through the provision of more social facilities for childcare would not necessarily mean that more parents of young children would become union activists or indeed engage in any other voluntary activity. This is indeed a point that some of Wertheimer and Nelson's informants recognise when they note disapprovingly that non-activists find time to go to the hairdresser but not the union meeting (Wertheimer and Nelson 1975). There can be work-related, union-related and societal-cultural-personal reasons for union participation and office-holding. Given the progress women have made in

unions since Wertheimer and Nelson wrote in 1975 it is now appropriate for the study of women's union involvement to place more emphasis on reasons for participation, while not discounting the significance of barriers to participation for many women workers.

One study of a group of women workers who were highly committed to work is Fonow's study of women steel-workers (1977). These were women who had entered non-traditional jobs under affirmative action programmes. She found that women who were active in the union tended to compare their job status with that of men in the steel industry, whereas non-active women tended to compare their present jobs with their previous work. One factor Fonow identifies as a motivator for union activism was economic independence, a factor which tends to span the work-related and personal-societal-cultural dimensions of union participation. She found that the most active women tended either to be single or divorced or to be married to men with low incomes.

Harrison's 1979 study of ASTMS (Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs) members is, despite the title, Participation of Women in Trade Union Activities; some research findings and comments, a comparative study of women's and men's union participation. Her research is based on a questionnaire study of 96 women and 92 men. She found that 75% of women and 63% of men never attended branch meetings. Differences in job grades were significant for both sexes, with workers on higher grades more likely to participate. The timing of union meetings affected the attendance of both men and women. The venue of

the union meeting was a factor which affected women's but not men's attendance. What Harrison's study indicates is both similarities and differences in men's and women's union participation.

Purcell (1979) notes that there is a widespread assumption among writers on industrial relations and male trade unionists that women workers are less militant than men. She refers to this as the 'passive woman worker thesis'. She argues that there is a need to distinguish betwen militancy and activism, that militancy is an undefined concept and that militancy is situational. The reason many women workers may appear less militant is that they work in industries where workers are in a weaker bargaining position and so have less opportunity for the exercise of industrial militancy. In this respect Purcell's argument focuses on work-related factors. She notes also that most active female stewards were single or did not have children and that many women workers may be put off by the homosocial male club aspect of trade unionism.

The study of the unionisation of the London clearing banks by Heritage (1977, 1983) shows the significance of occupational segregation in influencing the union participation of male and female bank workers. Banking was an industry characterised by an internal labour market in which women were brought in at lower levels, where most stayed without any career prospects or access to training, while men were brought in at a higher level and put on a career path. Thus when it came to willingness to take industrial action for union recognition the men were more reluctant than the women, because the men but not the women had

career prospects to lose. Heritage also notes the popularity with female bank staff of the union's demand for Saturday closing of banks, although the evidence for a major gender difference here is not convincing, since there is little evidence that the masculine gender role, apart from a few self-proclaimed workaholics, involves a strong desire to work at weekends. There is probably more gender difference in the uses to which weekend time is allocated (Green, Hebron and Woodward 1990).

An example of the interrelationship of union-related and cultural-societal-personal barriers to participation is provided by Cook, Lorwin and Daniels (1984). They note that in some Scandanavian countries women encountered difficulties in taking on union office because of the requirement that office-holders were active both in the union and in a working-class political party, and while women could possibly have combined union or party activism with their domestic roles, it was impossible for many women to combine all three.

Baden (1986) argues that many past studies of union participation tended to ignore the issue of gender. This is not entirely accurate, although it is the case that many of the classic studies of the 1950s and 1960s made certain rigid assumptions about gender roles, but this was before the development of feminist writings which made a clear distinction between sex and gender (Oakley 1975). Baden notes that an increase in female membership and leadership in public sector unions occurred at the time of the growth of the women's movement, and that many women in

public sector unions were motivated to take up union office as a result of feminist politics.

Till-Retz (1986) argues that in Europe the major progress in women's involvement in unions occurred after the mid-seventies. Like Baden (1986), her analysis suggests that feminism has had a considerable impact on women's union participation and that unions have to some degree responded by making room for women within union structures, for example through the establishment of women's rights committees and reserved places for women. It is noticeable that the more recent studies, while acknowledging that much still has to be done for women to be equal in unions, present a rather more 'optimistic' picture of women's levels of union participation. This underlines the need for studies of women's union participation to avoid starting off from an assumption that women participate less than men, and to be careful to research reasons for participation as well as barriers to participation.

The study by Cobble (1990) of union organisation among waitresses in the USA is one instance of a study which takes as its focus the explanation of high levels of union activism among women. Waitresses organised in HERE (Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees) International Union were well organised and often took on union leadership roles. This arose partly because of work-related factors in that waitressing as a job developed skills of negotiating, controlling situations and answering back to customers, which made it easier for women to participate in debate at union meetings. Waitresses also

tended to belong to an occupational community in which they socialised with other waitresses especially when working split shifts, often shared accommodation with other waitresses and had a pride in the job. Some similarities can be seen with the printworkers studied by Lipset, Trow and Coleman (1954) who had a strong sense of occupational identity and socialised with other printworkers, especially in the early years in the trade when they worked the night shift. The personal domestic situation of many waitresses also meant they did not experience family-related barriers to union participation. Many waitresses were single, divorced, separated or widowed and so were in non-traditional family situations, which made union participation easier. Lastly the union structure encouraged, indeed forced, women's union participation. Many waitresses were organised in single-sex locals and so had no option but to take on union office-holding, if they wanted a union to represent them. The single-sex structure of the locals arose largely from occupational segregation in the industry. The majority of female leaders at the national level too tended to come from single-sex locals and the highest level of women's participation in the union occurred in the 1920s when the majority of women were in single-sex locals. The female locals declined from the 1930s, but women's committees were created in the new mixed locals to encourage women's participation, although their effectiveness was limited. Cobble notes that a combination of work-related, family-related and union-related circumstances created high and enduring patterns of union activism among waitresses in an AFL (American Federation of Labour) -affiliated craft union, an area not traditionally considered favourable to women's union representation.

2.2.b (ii) Women's under-representation in union office-holding

There is a substantial body of literature which documents women's under-representation in trade union leadership (Cook 1968, Dewey 1971, Bergquist 1974, Krebs 1975, Fryer, Fairclough and Manson 1978, Hardman 1984, Rees 1990). It should be kept in mind that participation and representation are not the same. It is perfectly possible for women to participate especially at the local level without achieving high union office. For instance Hardman notes that in her study of a GMWU (General and Municipal Workers Union) branch women were a majority of the members and of the shop stewards, but the men held the most important union offices. Moreover the men had introduced a rule into the branch so that whenever there was a female convenor, she had to have a male deputy, and vice versa. This form of reserved places for men had been brought in to avoid a situation in which women held both the convenor and deputy convenor posts (Hardman 1984).

The work of Fryer, Fairclough and Manson (1976) is one of the most important studies of the processes whereby women come to be under-represented in union leaderships. In their study of NUPE (National Union of Public Employees) they found women members, particularly in Local Authority Education Departments, were disadvantaged in union office-holding by being part-time workers. Being part-time they were not in the workplace all day and so it was harder for them to represent members. Moreover full-time jobs, such as school caretaker, which were more likely to be be performed by men, provided access to an office,

telephone and photocopier, thus supplying resources which made it easier to be a union representative. This study showed the need for unions to negotiate facilities agreements, which provide both part-time and full-time workers with access to office space and equipment and paid time off for union work. Fryer et al. recommend that unions seeking to improve women's levels of office-holding need to pay more attention to the operation of facility agreements. Their work is significant in terms of highlighting the influence of occupational factors on women's union participation.

Rees (1990) examines women's union participation and representation in NALGO and USDAW (Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers). She links these issues with the issue of union democracy. Her explanation for women's under-representation in union office-holding in both unions involves factors arising from women's work and family situation. In terms of work-related factors women worked in lower status occupations, had interrupted working lives and were more likely to work part-time. This led to shorter periods of continuous union membership, which made women less likely to take on union office. Also she found that while the typical male NALGO activist was married with young children the typical female activist was more likely to be single and childfree than NALGO women members in general.

2.2.b (iii) Women union leaders

Given all the literature dealing with the obstacles to women's union participation and the under-representation of women in union leadership, what is known about women union leaders at local and national level? The study of women who do rise to union leadership is important for understanding women's union involvement in general. A small but increasing body of literature on women lay officers and full-time officials indicates two trends, namely that most are single and do not have young children, and many are to some degree influenced by feminism.

The significance of personal situation is indicated in the research of Abicht (1976) who in a comparative study of Belgium and the U.S.A. found that women union office-holders were more likely to be single, self-supporting and without children. Ledgerwood (1980) in her study of 255 CLUW (Coalition of Labor Union Women) members found that over half were single. Walton (1985) in her study of shop stewards in the Kent County branch of NALGO notes that more male than female stewards had young children. She notes that her results corresponded too with the national survey of NALGO members by Rees and Reed (1981) which found that more male stewards tended to be married and more female stewards to be single. The study of women full-time officials by Heery and Kelly (1988a and 1989) notes that 54% of their informants did not have children. Ledwith, Colgan, Joyce and Hayes (1990) in their study of women in SOGAT (Society of Graphical and Allied Trades) present a slightly more complex view of the presence of children. They found many

women union leaders did not have children or had grown up children, but they found a small minority who were seeking to combine working, raising small children and union office-holding. Such women were very dependent on support of partners, mothers and childminders.

Roby and Uttal (1988) provide the most detailed discussion of the relationship for male and female stewards between home life and union office-holding. They conducted 124 in-depth interviews with shop stewards, 47% of whom were female. The male stewards were more likely to be married with children. 18% of male stewards and 27% of female stewards were single. They found that single female stewards were more active in the union than single male stewards, while married male stewards were more active than married female stewards. So marriage appeared to increase men's levels of union activism, but to decrease women's. They found that while both men and women experienced problems of combining family and union life, they had different problems and reached different solutions. The female stewards in their survey who were married and had children tended to reduce their union work outside work time and prioritised family commitments, such as children's birthday parties. The male stewards who were married more often allowed union work to spill over into non-work time and prioritised union commitments over family ones. Clearly they relied on the fact that their wife would be present at the children's birthday parties, although Roby and Uttal point out that many of the wives of male stewards were themselves in full-time paid employment. One male steward even chose to go picketing rather than be present at the birth of his child. For many female

stewards the solution to pressures of union work was to cut back on time spent in personal relationships, to get divorced from husbands who were not prepared to accept their union involvement, and to negotiate carefully the terms of any new relationships they entered.

The impact of feminist ideas on women union office-holders is shown in Heery and Kelly (1988b). They explored the negotiating priorities of union full-time officials, and found that many women full-time officials, especially the more recently appointed ones, as well as a significant minority of male full-time officials, had been influenced by feminism and did consider equal opportunities issues as important parts of the union's bargaining agenda. They identified the promotion of women's interests as an important part of their job. It was an aspect of the work to which they felt a strong personal commitment and from which they derived considerable job satisfaction.

Other studies of women in union leadership give some indication of how women reach union office and how they participate in union committees. Cunnison (1983) and Ledwith, Colgan, Joyce and Hayes (1990) indicate the importance of sponsorship in the acquisition of union office. Both studies note the tendency of some existing senior office-holders, usually men, to encourage women to take on union positions, although Ledwith et al. note that some women manage to get elected to positions in the union without sponsorship. Izraeli's study of union committees in Israel (Izraeli 1984) employs Kanter's concept of tilted groups (Kanter 1977) to examine men's and women's attitudes on union committees which varied in

gender balance. Kanter's analysis of inequalities in employment focuses particularly on ratios of minority and majority categories, starting with the token situation, in which only a few women or members of ethnic minorities are hired and so they experience the stresses of being on trial on behalf of their section of humanity. Then, as the proportion of the minority within the group reaches 15%, Kanter defines it as a skewed group. Once the minority has reached 35% she defines it as a tilted group. While similar processes of stereotyping occur within skewed and tilted groups, they are stronger in skewed groups.

Izraeli's study is concerned with tilted groups (the 35%/65% ratio), some tilted in favour of men and others tilted in favour of women. She finds that women felt more influential when women were in a majority on a committee, but men felt more influential when they were in a minority on a committee. She argues therefore that the election of women to union office does not necessarily guarantee that they will occupy leading positions on committees. In this respect her conclusions are similar to those of Hardman (1984). This study suggests that even women who have been elected onto union committees still encounter barriers to participation, which fall into the personal-societal-cultural category of Wertheimer and Nelson (1975).

2.2.b (iv) Responsiveness of union structures and policies to women's interests

Wertheimer and Nelson's discussion of union-related barriers to women's participation indicates the significance of the structure and culture of unions as collective organisations in terms of women's union involvement. This raises the question of how far unions have changed as the number of women members and office-holders has increased. This is partly a matter of policies and bargaining priorities, partly a matter of ways of organising. As Lorwin (1979) notes these developments require changes on the part of men as well as women. He quotes one of his male informants as saying:-

"The only correct answer to the question, 'What shall we do about women?' is 'We must do something about men'".

The 1980 pamphlet by Coote and Kellner attacked trade unions for failing to respond to the needs of women members in terms of both bargaining priorities and the operation of union structures. The study by Leman (1980) of developments in the women's rights work of three unions ACTT (Association of Cinemagraphic Technical Trades), NALGO (National and Local Government Officers Association) and NATFHE (National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education) shows that considerable progress was made in some unions during the 1970s. She notes that until the 1970s the trade union agenda on women's rights was largely confined to equality in terms of pay, pensions and other job-related benefits. Leman's account shows how the range of issues unions

considered as part of their women's rights policy expanded in response to the debates about abortion rights and around the Working Women's Charter, which took place in the 1970s. (These developments are discussed in sections 2.4.a and 2.4.b of this chapter). Ellis (1981) also indicates that several unions did make major changes in the 1970s, conducting much action research into the position of women in the union and in employment and developing new structures to address women's issues. Ellis (1981) explains women's under-representation in unions largely in terms of the same factors which make for women's under-achievement in employment, i.e. occupational segregation and domestic responsibilities. Consequently her later work (1988) addresses the limited success trade unions have had in tackling occupational segregation, while recognising the extent of change within the trade union movement.

Gender differences may exist not only in bargaining priorities, but also in styles of collective bargaining and union organising. Cunnison (1983) discusses the failure of union branch structures to address the problems faced by female school meals staff, when the women went to the meeting and tried to raise matters of concern to them. Because the women did not know how to operate union procedures they were unable to get their issues onto the agenda and left the meeting feeling frustrated and angry. This example raises the question of the balance between on the one hand educating women to participate more effectively in unions as they are presently structured and on the other changing the structures of unions to make them more accessible to women members. Milkman

(1985) compares the examples of CLUW (Coalition of Labor Union Women) and the National Organisation of Working Women: 9 to 5 as alternative ways of organising women workers.

CLUW was established in 1974 at a founding convention in Chicago attended by 3000 women from 58 different labour unions. Its membership is restricted to existing union members. The first convention adopted four goals: organising unorganised women; working in unions to win support for affirmative action; involving more union women in political campaigns such as support for the Equal Rights Amendment; encouraging women's participation within unions. Milkman argues that despite these goals CLUW has increasingly come to focus on helping women who are already in the unions to move upwards in the union structures. CLUW in 1985 had 15,000 members with 60 local chapters. It provides training and empowerment to help women get on in the existing union structures. Its keenest members are full-time union employees, who find it provides a valuable network. Milkman suggests that CLUW's practice is quite individualistic and so the organisation may be difficult for rank and file women members and unorganised women to identify with.

Milkman argues that a very different form of women's union organising is represented by the National Organisation of Working Women: 9 to 5, which draws far more from feminist than from traditional trade union ways of organising. 9 to 5 was originally established in Boston in 1973 as an organisation for women office workers outside the labour union movement. It started out with consciousness-raising and organising around specific

issues affecting office workers such as sexual harassment at work and unsafe office technology. Effectively it became a pre-union organisation, which brought into collective action groups of office workers who did not see unions as relevant to them and were not necessarily prepared to join a union immediately.

Another similar organisation to 9 to 5 was Union Wage (Union Women's Alliance to Gain Equality). This was a newspaper for working women established in 1971 in San Francisco. It existed until 1982 and provided an organising focus for rank-and-file women unionists. It viewed CLUW as too closely tied to the official labour movement and believed that CLUW's practice of only recruiting women who were already union members excluded the 90% of US women wage-earners who were not unionised, including many Third World women who worked in low-paid and non-unionised jobs (Downing 1984).

Burton (1987) gives a similar account to Milkman of the Baltimore Working Women Group which later affiliated to 9 to 5. In 1975 9 to 5 received a charter from the Service Employees International Union and began organising SEIU Local 925. Thus there are now two organisations, one an independent campaigning organisation of women office workers, the National Organisation of Working Women: 9 to 5, and one which is a within the organised labour movement, SEIU District 925. SEIU District 925 places much of its focus on organising all unorganised women clerical workers in the U.S.A. It enjoys a considerable degree of

autonomy within SEIU. Milkman quotes the SEIU President as saying that District 925 was to be run:-

"for women and by women who understand their problems."
(Milkman 1985).

Thus SEIU District 925 is starting its union organising from one feminist perspective that women are different from men, have different priorities and needs in labour organisations and different ways of organising, whereas CLUW is working from another feminist perspective that men and women essentially have common interests as workers and that in the words of the CLUW slogan "A Woman's Place is in her Union". Milkman (1985) argues that both CLUW and 9 to 5 are examples of the impact of feminism on the union movement. She writes:-

"In contrast to CLUW's focus on 'empowerment', 9 to 5 rejects the traditional 'macho' image of unionism, insisting that women workers, unaccustomed to viewing themselves as powerful, will be successfully unionised only if a different, more woman-oriented culture of unionism is developed." (P 316).

The question of union culture comes up in a number of studies. Heery and Kelly (1989) found that three quarters of their sample of women union full-time officers agreed that 'a woman union officer has to be tough to be successful at her job.' Some equated toughness with dedication and never going off sick unless very ill. For others toughness meant the development of a hard macho style especially in negotiations.

The fact that women full-time officers found it necessary to adopt these 'masculine' standards of behaviour did not mean they approved of them, wished to conform to them or considered them appropriate when working with women members. They were simply viewed as necessary survival mechanisms.

Feldberg (1989), Cockburn (1991) and Faue (1991) argue that the failure of unions to incorporate 'women's culture' has been a major factor in the labour movement's lack of success in organising women workers. The argument that unions need to focus more on women's workplace culture is an argument that unions need to pay more attention to gender differences when organising women workers. For Feldberg this argument represents something of a departure from the 1979 article by Feldberg and Glenn, where they argue that industrial sociology has too often used a gender model rather than a job model for explaining women's behaviour at work (Feldberg and Glenn 1979).

Much of the discussion of how far unions have adapted to become more relevant and more welcoming to women members in the 1970s rests upon some rather tenuous assumptions about what women members want from unions and how women view their work and their union situation. This involves several issues: how far are women and men similar or different in their priorities for collective bargaining and their preferred styles of union organising; how far do women have common interests and to what degree do women have different interests according to job status, class, race, ethnicity and similar divisions; how do trade unions as

organisations both recognise and respond to membership heterogeneity and maintain a basis of united action. The relationship between diversity and unity is a political problem which has also been recently addressed in the women's movement (Hamilton and Barrett 1986, Ramazanoglu 1989).

2.2.c Gender and Employment

2.2.c (i) Theoretical approaches

The impact of feminist theories on industrial sociology has led to a number of re-examinations of traditional approaches to the study of women and employment. Feldberg and Glenn (1979) argue that in the past industrial sociology has tended to use a **job model** to explain men's work behaviour and a **gender model** to explain women's work behaviour. Thus in the case of male workers the significance of gender role factors is discounted or minimised, while in the case of female workers the significance of occupational factors for attitudes to work, work experience and behaviour is ignored, since women's central life interest is assumed to be the family rather than paid work. They advocate "an integrated model which takes into account the interaction between job and gender factors" (p 527) for the study of both female and male workers. The advantage of such a model is that is offers the possibility of taking seriously women's experiences as paid workers and also of recognising that men's work behaviour can be influenced by family and other outside-work factors. It also allows recognition of the extent to which some occupations have developed to incorporate elements of gender roles into the performance of work. The practical difficulty in applying this integrated model may be one of constantly keeping in mind both gender role and occupational factors.

Brown (1976) suggests that many studies in industrial sociology have either employed a gender-blind approach, which allowed conclusions from studies of male workers to be applied unquestioningly to female workers and vice versa, or else tended to treat women employees as a special problem. The difficulty with the first approach is that it takes no account of possible gender differences, i.e. it applies what Feldberg and Glenn refer to as the 'job model' for both sexes, while the problem with the second is that it looks at women's work experience solely in terms of what Feldberg and Glenn call the 'gender model'.

Traditionally much of the sociology of women's work looked at how women combined work and family roles, e.g. Myrdal and Klein (1970, first published in 1956). For 1950s feminists such as Myrdal and Klein there was a perceived political need to defend mothers' right to engage in paid employment, to argue women's social obligation to contribute their skills to industry and society in a time of economic expansion, and to present the case that women's work outside the home would not have harmful consequences for the welfare of children or the family. Two decades later much of the work on dual-career families (Young and Willmott 1973, Rapoport and Rapoport 1976) works along similar lines, while accepting that women will typically return to work earlier after the birth of children. The problems of this approach in terms of social policy is that it leaves the woman and to a lesser degree other members of her family to do all the adjusting to the demands of paid work. Moreover it is an approach which tends not to treat employment as a central life interest for women and assumes that all women will marry

and have children and will not be primary breadwinners. Thus there is a tendency to equate the category 'woman' with 'married women with children' and thus ascribe a lesser commitment to employment to all women.

Before discussing the impact of feminism on academic studies of women's employment it is useful to consider how the women's movement has approached the question of women's paid work. Beechey (1987) suggests that a study of women's movement literature indicates that in the earlier years of the women's movement far more attention was paid to issues of employment and equal pay. Indeed there is a long socialist and feminist tradition, going back at least as far as Engels, Bebel and Kollontai, which sees paid work as a means of emancipation for women. In more recent years Beechey argues that it appears that the feminist movement has been more concerned with issues such as violence against women, sexuality, culture and ideology. Nonetheless real changes have occurred in women's position in employment and in the trade unions and the women's movement, if defined in a broad sense to include liberal feminists, has continued to work on issues such as equal opportunities and positive action programmes (Beechey 1987).

The work of Kanter (1977) is an example of a feminist approach to the study of women's and men's work experience which largely uses a job model to explain women's under-representation at higher levels of the occupational structure. Kanter's argument is that 'under-achievement' in employment does not arise from the personal characteristics of women

and minority groups, but rather from their position in the structure of the organisation. She writes:-

"My examinations of how forms of work organization, and the conceptions of roles and distributions of people within them, shape behavioural outcomes leaves very few verifiable 'sex differences' in behaviour that are not better explained by roles and situations - and thus able to account for men's behaviour too" (p xii).

Kanter works within a liberal feminist paradigm which some feminists would claim under-rates the importance of gender. It is, however, important for feminists to recognise that the significance of gender differences is sometimes over-emphasised to the detriment of an understanding of the characteristics and concerns women and men share as workers. In the treatment of the degree of significance of gender differences there may be a degree of convergence between liberal feminism and socialist feminism. Liberal feminists seek to improve women's employment situation through various initiatives such as education, training, mentor schemes, the use of role models and affirmative action programmes. Socialist feminists seek to improve the position of women in employment through work in the trade unions and support for affirmative action. There may be differences in the models of affirmative action used, liberal or radical (Jewson and Mason 1986), and in the degree of emphasis on individual versus collective solutions, but the two groups are agreed, in terms of strategy, on the importance of paid work to women's liberation and, in analysis, that women and men have many shared characteristics as employees, despite differences in gender roles.

More recent studies, such as the work of Walby (1986) on patriarchy, have tended to approach the study of gender and employment by relating it to wider theoretical debates about the causes of women's oppression. This has involved the discussion of a variety of definitions of patriarchy and a range of theories about the relationship between capitalism, job segregation by sex and the oppression of women. Walby (1986) in a useful classification suggests that writings on gender inequality can be grouped in five categories:

(a) those that treat gender inequality as insignificant or non-existent,

(b) those that see gender inequality as derivative from capitalism,

(c) those that see gender inequality as a result of patriarchy alone,

(d) those that see capitalist patriarchy as a unified system, and

(e) those that see capitalism and patriarchy as two separate but inter-related systems.

Walby's own preference is for the fifth position, on the grounds that to treat capitalism and patriarchy as one system ignores the conflicts that have existed and do continue to exist between the two systems. Walby is undoubtedly raising a valid issue in identifying tensions between capitalism and patriarchal attitudes in the area of women's employment. For instance she suggests that the introduction of restrictive legislation on women's employment was opposed by many manufacturers, while supported by middle-class reformers and some trade unions. It could on the other hand be argued that the capitalist state was acting in the interests of the capitalist class as a whole in restricting women's labour in an attempt to ensure the reproduction of the working

class, although this did not necessarily have to be done by supporting the working class family.

Recently the dominant socialist-feminist orthodoxy that socialist-feminists are conducting a struggle against both capitalism and patriarchy, has been challenged by Lindsey German (1989). German argues that there is only one mode of production in society, namely capitalism, not two, capitalism and patriarchy, and that only a minority of men, i.e. those of the capitalist class, benefit from the oppression of women. Unlike many socialist-feminists who argue that capitalism cannot be the cause of women's oppression because the oppression of women predates capitalism, German restates the classical marxist analysis which locates the origins of women's oppression in the beginning of class society, of which capitalism is only one stage. It is noteworthy that Walby's study (1986) does not deal with this distinction between class society and capitalism.

2.2.c (ii) Occupational segregation

During the 1970s and 1980s researchers became increasingly interested in occupational segregation. The passing of the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) meant that theoretically nearly all jobs should be open to both sexes and expectations were raised of much greater equality in employment. The Equal Pay Act (1970) raised women's average hourly earnings from 63.1% of men's in 1970, to 75.5% in 1977, but by 1979 the

figure had fallen back to 73% and in 1987, ten years later, it was 73.6% (Ellis 1988). This limited effectiveness focused the attention of researchers and policy-makers on the continuing existence of occupational segregation by sex. The extent of occupational segregation by sex has been documented by Hakim (1978, 1979, 1981). Her work shows its continuity during the Twentieth Century and the limited impact of the Sex Discrimination Act (1975). Two more recent studies (Cockburn 1987, Roberts, Richardson and Dench 1988) show that there has been little reduction in occupational segregation among young workers, the group who might be expected to be most influenced by changes in the educational system and changing social attitudes.

Martin and Roberts (1984) discuss the significance of occupational segregation for equal pay claims and for attitudes to work, particularly the belief in the other sex's ability or willingness to do one's work. Their study of the place of employment in women's lives shows that many women, especially part-time workers, and even more men work in work situations in which members of the other sex do not do the same job. They suggest this has major implications for attitudes to gender roles in the workplace, since many workers experience gender segregation as an aspect of their daily working lives and so find it difficult to envisage the other sex carrying out the work they perform.

Reference has already been made to the limited effectiveness of the legislation to change women's situation at work. Dex and Shaw (1986) in a comparative study of British and American women at work argue that

equal opportunities policies do affect women's employment situation, but that child-care policies are more important. Since 1954 some tax concessions have been available for working parents in the USA and so more working parents there use paid child-care services, while more working parents in Britain depend upon relatives to care for their children. The employment of paid child-care services tends to accompany full-time working, while the pattern of reliance on relatives for childcare is more often associated with part-time working. They also note the impact of the employment structure, particularly the greater number of part-time jobs in Britain. In the USA there is less part-time work available, because the different structure of the national insurance system gives employers far less economic incentive than in Britain to employ part-time workers. This means that fewer American than British women experience the particular disadvantages often associated with part-time work. Martin and Roberts (1984) and Robinson (1988) indicate that higher levels of sex segregation accompany part-time than full-time work. Dex and Shaw also note that the US legislation was more effective because it was introduced at a time of economic expansion and it it easier for women to enter non-traditional jobs in such circumstances than in a recession (Dex and Shaw 1986). It is also the case that the affirmative action laws in the USA were much stronger, permitting the use of quotas in hiring, although Dex and Shaw appear to pay little attention to this factor.

Dex and Shaw's comment on the greater importance of child-care provision echoes earlier observations about the limitations of the British

legislation. In 1975 Luise and Dipak Nandy argued that the Equal Pay Act (1970) and Sex Discrimination Act (1975) needed to be supplemented by more provision for childcare and more social support for the family, on the grounds that women could not become equal in employment if still expected to perform a disproportionate share of domestic work (Nandy and Nandy 1975).

Another aspect of occupational segregation which has concerned researchers and policy-makers has been the likely impact of changes in technology on women's employment. In the 1970s there were various predictions of rapid job losses consequent on the introduction of new technology, which have not been substantiated by subsequent developments. Subsequently researchers have addressed more the question of who gets the new jobs and who controls the technology (Game and Pringle 1984, Cockburn 1985, Hacker 1989, Smith and Turner 1990, Webster 1991, Cassell 1991). While this is still an ongoing debate some tentative conclusions can be drawn. These would suggest that technology adapts to existing gender divisions within the workplace (Webster 1991) and different technologies become associated either with men or with women (Cockburn 1985). Hacker's study of affirmative action at AT&T (American Telephone and Telegraph Company) argues that women and minorities were allowed under affirmative action schemes into jobs which the employer later intended to automate out of existence, and the introduction of these groups was a managerial strategy to undermine resistance to redundancy.

2.2.c (iii) Relation between paid work and domestic role

The literature on occupational segregation shows a variety of explanations of the relationship between paid work and women's domestic role and family situation. This is a central theoretical issue for understanding the causes of women's oppression. It is also relevant to the importance of positive action in employment as a strategy for women's liberation. Barrett (1980) tends to locate the basis of women's oppression within the family and to explain much occupational segregation as an extension of women's domestic role. Similarly Ellis (1988) explains occupational segregation in terms of women's role in the family. She writes:-

"The sexual division of labour in the home conditions the role expectations of women and young girls and severely limits the working roles of wives and mothers." (Ellis 1988 p 135)

In Glenn and Feldberg's terminology this is an example of the **gender model** applied to women's work situation. Hartmann and Walby on the other hand opt for an explanation which is closer to the **job model** (Glenn and Feldberg 1979). Both Hartmann and Walby explain women's family situation in terms of their work position. According to Hartmann:-

"Job segregation by sex, I will argue, is the primary mechanism in capitalist society that maintains the superiority of men over women, because it enforces lower wages for women in the labour market. Low wages keep women dependent on men because they encourage women to marry" (Hartmann 1979a p 208).

Here Hartmann is implying that greater equality at work and more economic resources would give women more choice about whether to take on particular roles in the family and greater scope to renegotiate these roles. The limited amount of evidence concerning women workers in North America who have entered non-traditional jobs under affirmative action provisions would suggest that greater economic independence does indeed change women's position within the family (Walshok 1981, Larkin 1983).

Similarly Walby writes:-

"Against the traditional view, that the position of women in the labour market is determined by their position in the family, I will argue for the importance of labour market structures in confining women to a subordinate position in the household" (Walby 1986 p 1-2).

Walby's argument is that the development of the sexual division of labour has to be understood in a historical context of women's exclusion or segregation in employment and that it is the lack of opportunities in the labour market which lead women to accept the domestic role.

The question of the degree of trade union culpability for the development of occupational segregation by sex is one important aspect of this debate. Both Hartmann and Walby cite instances of male trade unions excluding women from occupations. On the other hand Cockburn (1988) and Roberts, Richardson and Dench (1988) both note that occupational segregation was as strong in non-unionised as unionised areas of employment and that male workers' discriminatory preferences were only effective when they co-incided with the preferences of the

employer, which suggests that not all the responsibility can be laid at the door of the trade unions.

Ellis (1988) summarises the changes in trade union attitudes to the question of a woman's place. She notes that the TUC by 1985 finally abandoned any support for the principle of a family wage and recognised that union policies had to be geared more to families and households with a more egalitarian structure in which both partners performed paid work outside the home and shared responsibilities for childcare and domestic work. O'Donnell and Hall (1988) document similar changes occuring in the Australian Congress of Trade Unions in 1977. These changes came about as a result of prolonged feminist campaigning within the unions and it can reasonably be presumed reflected changes in the attitudes of active trade union members.

The extent to which the attitudes of women workers to the question of women's role have changed is less easy to identify. Attitudes to work and to women's role may vary with occupational status. Purcell (1982) in her study of fatalist attitudes among women manual workers links these attitudes to work experience and membership of the working class, as well as female biology and the social experience of being a woman. Agassi (1982) takes the argument further along the line of occupational influence on attitudes to work. She writes:-

"In general, the clearest and most significant finding about the differences between the sexes concerning work attitudes is that none is sex specific in the sense that no difference holds regardless of occupational differences. Thus, although women are on the average less interested in advancement than men, female office employees are slightly more interested in advancement than male industrial workers" (xiv-xv).

Agassi (1982) argues that better quality jobs are likely to develop more egalitarian attitudes among women, and that office workers have less traditional attitudes to gender roles than industrial workers. Martin and Roberts (1984) in their study of the place of employment in women's lives are cautious in their conclusions about the impact of feminism on women's consciousness and the extent to which women's views of gender roles are changing. They argue that women's orientations to work are influenced by the notion of a choice of whether to take paid work, and by different socialisation from that experienced by men. In most of the couples in their survey they found the husband was the primary breadwinner, earning more and working longer hours, and the wife the primary homemaker, doing far more than half of the housework and childcare. On the other hand they note that women now tend to stop work after the birth of the first child rather than on marriage and that women are returning to work earlier after having children, with some women returning to work between the birth of children. Most women did have some degree of attachment to work, with childless women over the age of thirty most likely to have a high intrinsic attachment to work. Thus the changes in women's working patterns which they identify point in the direction of greater involvement of women in paid work. The nature of the work, as Agassi argues, is of course significant for the extent to which the experience of paid work fosters egalitarian attitudes in the home.

The issue of changing gender roles in work and in the home cannot only be examined by looking at how far women's behaviour and attitudes have

changed. The concept of the 'new man' has been advanced in the media to describe a new type of man genuinely committed to sex equality and sharing of gender roles. The extent to which men's behaviour in relation to housework has really changed is discussed by a number of authors. Some such as Luxton (1986) and Wheelock (1990) present cautiously optimistic views of changing gender roles. Luxton in her studies of Flin Flon, a mining town in Northern Manitoba, found that men's participation in housework had increased between her first study in 1976/7 and her second study in 1981. Among the half of her sample of working couples where the woman supported more role-sharing the amount of time men spent on domestic labour had increased by 8.3 hours per week between 1976 to 1981, while the amount of time the women spent had decreased by 4.3 hours per week over the same period. The study by Wheelock (1990) of the impact of male unemployment on the domestic division of labour among thirty Wearside couples found a change in nearly 50% of the households towards a more flexible division of labour within the home, following the man's loss of employment.

These works contrast with Hunt's study of Silverdale (Hunt 1980) where there was little paid employment for women and gender roles were still highly segregated, a situation which Hunt identified as divisive and hostile to working class unity. Morris (1990) in a survey of research on the household tends to suggest that increased female labour force participation and increased male unemployment have not produced any substantial changes in the domestic division of labour or the distribution of power within the family and the household. This is an

area where the sociological debate is far from concluded, possibly because of terminological and methodological difficulties in researching this topic.

A different perspective on the question of working class unity is provided in Ian Watt's study of women tobacco workers in Glasgow (Watt 1980). Watt suggests that women in employment can develop radical attitudes at work, involving a strong degree of support for trade unions and the Labour Party, as a result of their work experience, but that this radicalism can be of a discrete character and does not necessarily spill over into the home or alter traditional attitudes to the domestic division of labour. Whether radicalism developed in the workplace is of a discrete character or has implications for attitudes and behavour outside work may depend to some extent upon the policies of the trade union. It is an important question in terms of the debate about how far work experiences can change perceptions of gender roles.

Simpson and Murrell (1981) ask the question of whether women's social consciousness reflects a gender or a class identity. This formulation implies that a class identity is not 'gendered', whether in the narrow sense of a form of class identity based on the traditional experience of male blue-collar workers or in a wider political sense of a form of class consciousness which incorporates awareness of gender issues as part of a radical perspective. This study is unfortunately limited by undefined and imprecise concepts of class and class consciousness. To take one example, they identify women professionals and managers who

define themselves as working class as suffering from false consciousness, a position which ignores the complex debates about the class position of white-collar workers and the variety of possible definitions of social class. They conclude that women's disadvantaged position in secondary labour markets is a barrier to class consciousness, i.e. that most women's identity is based on gender role rather than occupational role. Their work is perhaps an illustration of what Purcell defines as the 'passive woman worker thesis' (Purcell 1979, 1982).

Ferree (1987) discusses the problem for working women and for the women's movement of the myth of superwoman, the woman who manages successfully to combine paid work, housework, marriage and childcare, and to perform all these tasks to a high standard. As Ferree puts it:-

"By defining the successful woman as one who is happily carrying this multiple burden, and in addition suggesting that it was women who sought this change, the superwoman ideal delegitimates discontent" (p 162).

She observes that the realities of trying to live up to this ideal can turn women against feminism, if feminism is identified with women taking on demanding full-time paid employment in addition to all their other non-paid work commitments. She illustrates this possibility with an amusing quotation from the actress, Lily Tomlin:-

"'If I had known that having it all was this much work, I would have settled for a lot less'". (p 163)

Moreover the superwoman stereotype divides women against each other, so that women who view themselves as being in paid employment from choice,

women who view themselves as being in paid employment from economic necessity and women who define themselves as having chosen a homemaker role become aware of the factors that divide them rather than their common interests as women in changing the relationship between paid and unpaid work in society. Ferree's analysis here is useful in highlighting the way gender divisions exist not only between women and men, but also within each sex. Cockburn (1983) makes a similar point about gender and skill divisions among male printworkers, where unskilled male workers were seen by skilled compositors as having less status both as workers and as men.

This example shows the problems of equal opportunities and affirmative action strategies which do not envisage changes in the structure of work and society in recognition of family and other domestic responsibilities. As Epstein puts it:-

"There have of course always existed strains between work and home. But there has always been the implicit assumption that if some adaptation were needed it is the family that must adjust to the demands of the workplace - indeed this has been the case so far. But things are changing and families are no longer prepared to adapt at all costs to the requirements of the work situation." (Epstein, Crehan, Gerzer and Sass 1986).

2.2.d White Collar Unionism

The classic sociological debates about the nature of white-collar unionism focused on the question of whether white-collar unions were essentially similar to blue-collar unions or were organisations of an essentially different character, more similar to staff organisations and professional associations (Lockwood 1958, Blackburn and Prandy 1965, Blackburn 1967, Prandy, Stewart and Blackburn 1974). Blackburn and Prandy divided the process of unionisation into completeness, i.e. recruiting as large a proportion of possible of the potential membership, and unionateness, becoming like a union in terms of seven criteria, which included pursuing collective bargaining and being willing to take industrial action. These criteria were essentially directed at identifying the distinctions between a staff association and a trade union. Several white-collar unions, e.g. NALGO, did develop from staff associations. Their argument was that unions would first pursue completeness and then become more unionate and that white-collar and blue-collar unions were not fundamentally dissimilar in character, a view which the subsequent evolution of white-collar unionism has largely supported.

This debate was to some degree a debate not only about the character of white-collar unionism, but also about the class consciousness of white-collar workers and whether white-collar workers had a class identity or a status identity. One of the difficulties of this debate is the variety of definitions of class consciousness used, ranging from class identity

to a revolutionary Marxist perspective. Lockwood (1958) argues that recognition of common interests with other workers in the same occupational group is a form of collectivism, but should not necessarily be equated to class consciousness. Bain, Coates and Ellis (1973) argue that Blackburn and Prandy's measures of unionateness do not necessarily measure class consciousness. They interpret NALGO's affiliation to the TUC in 1964 as an affiliation undertaken for largely instrumental rather than ideological reasons which did not necessarily involve any identification with the working class, although this was how Blackburn and Prandy interpreted affiliation to the TUC in their measures of unionateness. Volker (1966) gives a similar interpretation of NALGO's affiliation to the TUC. It should be noted that Prandy, Stewart and Blackburn (1983) in their later works take a more cautious approach to the identification of unionisation with the growth of class consciousness.

Studies of white-collar employees and their unions have also related to wider theories of social class (Hyman and Price 1983, Crompton and Jones 1984 and Crompton 1986). In some cases it has been argued that white-collar workers form a new working class, carrying on radical traditions formerly espoused by blue-collar unions. Others assert that they form part of the service class, whose radicalism, such as it is, arises from their specific occupational role. With the notable exception of the work of Crompton, studies of white-collar workers have paid little attention to the position of women in white-collar employment. Indeed Prandy, Blackburn and Stewart (1982, 1983) exclude women from their studies on

the grounds that the feminine gender role would complicate the research findings. Thus they provide a fairly recent illustration of Glenn and Feldberg's (1979) argument about how industrial sociology is limited by applying the **job model** to men and the **gender model** to women.

Crompton and Jones (1984) take issue with the rejection of the proletarianisation thesis, the argument that white-collar workers are increasingly becoming part of the working class, by Prandy, Blackburn and Stewart. Prandy et al. had rejected the proletarianisation thesis on the grounds that male mobility out of clerical work is possible. Crompton and Jones reject this argument, partly on the grounds that they do not accept that women have no independent class position based on their own occupation, and partly because they argue that class position is a matter of social structure rather than social mobility. In their study of the work and union position of male and female clerical workers they find considerable gender and organisational differences. Crompton and Jones studied three organisations, a local authority (Cohall), an insurance company (Lifeco) and a clearing bank (Southbank). Each of these organisations had different employment structures, with different implications for career structures and prospects of being promoted out of clerical work. The bank operated an internal labour market, with requirements for geographical mobility, and here women fared worst in career terms, with many women having been discouraged from taking the Institute of Banking examinations. Female union density in the bank was the lowest of the three workplaces at 37% and Crompton and Jones explain this in terms of a discriminatory employment structure which

discouraged women's commitment to work. Male union density was around 70% in all three workplaces. The insurance company (Lifeco) operated an internal labour market, but without geographical mobility requirements. There was a strong male organisational culture at Lifeco, focused on sports. Women's union density in this environment was 57%. At Cohall (the local authority) where there was a strong ideology of equal opportunity, external recruitment of staff, and employment of some women in senior positions, women's union density was 73%. Thus Crompton and Jones relate patterns of women's union membership to occupational position, but they do not necessarily equate proletarian status with higher levels of union organisation. They conclude that the vast majority of female clerical workers as well as a number of male clerical workers constitute a white-collar proletariat, although this argument seems to be based partly on lack of promotion prospects as well as present employment situation.

One of the main examples used in much of this literature about the nature of white-collar unionism is NALGO. For instance Lockwood (1958) in his study of clerks makes considerable use of Spoor's account of the first sixty years of NALGO (Spoor 1967). NALGO was established in 1905 with 5000 members, from a merger of the Liverpool Municipal Officers' Guild, the London Municipal Officers' Association and other municipal officers' associations. One of its early leaders, Herbert Blain, who had established the Liverpool Municipal Officers' Guild in 1896 and was the first Chairman of NALGO, later became Principal Agent of the Conservative Party 1924-27 (Maybin 1980). According to Spoor (1967) in the early

years much of NALGO's work was concerned with organising social activities for the members, such as rifle clubs, sports clubs, and holiday and motoring clubs, as well as establishing a building society and a savings and insurance society. He notes that the Sheffield Guild originally developed from a rifle club.

Early leaders of NALGO tended to be conservative professionals who insisted that NALGO was not a trade union. Levi Hill, NALGO's first full-time General Secretary, stated in 1911 that:-

"anything savouring of trade unionism is nausea to the local government officer and his Association" (Maybin 1980).

According to Spoor NALGO started to become a trade union at the 1918 conference when a motion was carried calling for the establishment of a national salary scale. This conference also carried a motion calling on officers not to apply for posts in local authorities which treated their employees badly. The boycott of posts has been a long-lasting NALGO tactic, with lists of posts to be boycotted regularly listed in NALGO publications. In 1920 the NALGO conference voted in favour of becoming a union. Spoor suggests this was partly because NALGO was losing members among radicalised ex-soldiers who were joining rival organisations and partly because many Labour-controlled local councils were prepared to employ only trade unionists. The establishment of the Whitley Council system in 1920 did not, as NALGO had hoped, lead to the creation of national salary scales for local government. It was not until 1944 that NALGO achieved national salary scales. Meanwhile NALGO had done much to create the profession of local government officer.

Several studies of the growth of white-collar unionism note the links between unionisation and bureaucratisation. On the one hand growing bureaucracy and rationalisation can be a factor motivating white-collar workers to join unions (Lumley 1973), but equally on the other hand the union can be a promoter of rationalisation and bureaucratisation, by pushing for standardised entry criteria, grading structures and national salary scales. Lockwood (1958) and Spoor (1967) argue that NALGO played a major in the bureaucratisation of local government. The establishment of a bureaucratic structure then favours the further development of union organisation, including national structures for collective bargaining. NALGO thus provides a clear illustration of some of the major theories concerning the growth of white-collar unionism.

The subsequent evolution of NALGO can also be studied as an example of the increasing radicalisation of white-collar unions. In 1964 NALGO affiliated to the TUC. While the affiliation was supported by the union's leadership for largely instrumental reasons, it is reasonable to suppose that a proportion of the activists who lobbied for affiliation did so from ideological reasons. During the 1960s and 1970s sections of NALGO's membership experienced a degree of radicalisation in relation to the content of their work. The formation of CASECON, an organisation of radical social workers critical of existing social work practice, is one example of this process (Maybin 1980, Joyce, Corrigan and Hayes 1988). The first actual strikes of NALGO members also took place among social workers in 1978, although NALGO members in the electricity industry had voted for strike action as early as 1965 (Spoor 1967). In 1978-79

there was a 42 week long strike of social workers. The dispute was over the right of NALGO to negotiate social work grades locally. This strike paved the way for the development of far more workplace union organisation and the growth of the shop steward system in NALGO. NALGO conference in 1976 supported the development of a shop steward system, a move which had been campaigned for by the Nalgo Action Group, a left-wing caucus within the union. The 1978-79 strike was followed in 1983 by a major dispute involving residential social workers (Joyce, Corrigan and Hayes 1988). Since then NALGO branches have been involved in a number of local strikes (Weinstein 1986).

One of the noteworthy features of this radicalisation process is the imitation of blue-collar industrial forms of union organisation and the link between the growth of the shop steward system and the demand for more local bargaining. In the late 1980s and 1990s the push for plant bargaining has come more frequently from the employers' side, with national bargaining being criticised for inflexibility and lack of sensitivity to local labour market conditions. In other periods, however, it has been the trade union side which has supported workplace bargaining, as in the case of shop stewards at British Leyland in the 1970s or social workers in local government in the 1978/79 strike. Neither position, support for national or for local bargaining, is necessarily in itself more radical. For the union side the advantages of national bargaining lie in the unifying character of national salary rates and national agreements on conditions of service and the protection afforded thereby to the least well organised members, while

the advantages of local bargaining are a higher level of involvement of members in workplace trade union activity, greater union democracy and the possibility of obtaining more favourable settlements for well-organised groups of workers. In 1989 NALGO took national strike action for the first time in opposition to proposals from the employer to move away from national bargaining, because national rates of pay and conditions of service were seen by many trade unionists in the context of the late 1980s as gains of the labour movement which should be defended. Another aspect of radicalisation which affected NALGO, along with many other unions, in the 1970s was the growth in official union support for a number of left-wing causes, e.g. affiliation to the Chile Solidarity Campaign, the Anti-Apartheid Movement, the Anti-Nazi League and the National Abortion Campaign (Maybin 1980). The growing female membership of NALGO was reflected in the report in 1975 of an equal rights working party and the adoption of a range of policies on women's rights. The issue of campaigning against cutbacks in public expenditure was also a major focus of public sector union activity over this period. Weinstein (1986) discusses the later conflicts that arose between NALGO and Labour Councils over the issues of public expenditure cuts. In the 1970s and early 1980s NALGO members and Labour councils could often act jointly in campaigns against government cuts in public expenditure, even to the point of local government workers taking symbolic one-day strike actions in support of their employers against central government policies. Many NALGO members strongly identified with the cause of local government, since NALGO had done much historically to create the profession of local government officer. Many NALGO activists had a

political preference for working in the public sector rather than for a private employer and to some degree believed in the practice of municipal socialism and the theory that the local state could have a degree of independence from the central state machinery to pursue socialist policies in opposition to those of a Conservative government. The collapse of the campaign against rate-capping in the mid 1980s and the increasing recognition by Labour councils that they could not maintain all services and 'no-redundancy' policies meant the end of the road for illusions in municipal socialism. Increasingly groups of local authority trade unionists, including NALGO members found themselves taking industrial action against Labour local authorities, and as Weinstein (1986) notes they then found themselves being accused of being variously anti-socialist, anti-working class, racist and led by the Socialist Workers Party. Left Labour councillors did not see industrial action by their employees, particularly NALGO members, as a legitimate form of labour movement activity. Weinstein (1986) concludes that:-

"the traditional positions of these trade unionists, although characterised as defensive, negative and obstructive by some Labour councillors, have actually stood the test of time rather better than the more ambitious hopes of their socialist employers" (Weinstein 1986 p 41).

2.2.e Shop Stewards Committees

The growth of shop stewards systems has been referred to in the previous section as part of the process of development of NALGO as a

trade union. Shop stewards' committees are important in the structure of workplace trade unionism, although there is a relative scarcity of academic writing on industrial relations dealing with their operation. Hyman (1979) notes the spread of a blue-collar craft model of union representation, the shop steward system, to industrial and white-collar unions. Greater moves towards plant bargaining, which some employers are encouraging, may mean an increased role for shop stewards' committees in the future.

Studies of the operation of shop steward organisations tend to start with the Donovan Report of 1968 and its proposals to incorporate the informal system of workplace bargaining, carried out by shop stewards, into the formal system of industrial relations, carried out at national level between employers and full-time officials. Thus the policy recommendations of the Donovan Commission were to 'reform' the system of industrial relations along pluralist and voluntarist lines by reinforcing the framework of collective bargaining. These policy recommendations were not carried out by subsequent governments, which instead attempted to introduce legislative changes to reduce the power of trade unions. Some writers (Hyman 1979) have argued that to some degree shop stewards have become incorporated in the official structures of collective bargaining. Others (Brown 1978, Batstone 1984) are more critical of the corporatism thesis. Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel (1979) argue that joint shop stewards' committees play an important role in maintaining shared trade union values and acting as opinion formers

among the membership rather than being transmitters of management ideas, as the corporatism thesis would suggest.

The role that shop stewards committees can play in developing union consciousness and giving a lead on matters of policy and industrial action is important. They have a role in training new shop stewards and in providing frameworks for union activism. In the case of multi-union workplaces, such as those researched by Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel (1979), joint shop stewards' committees provide a structure for the formulation of joint union policies and allow shop stewards to develop an understanding of the views of representatives of other unions. In the public sector, particularly among white-collar employees, shop stewards' committees are more likely to be based on one union. In this case, particularly in the case of a large branch, a departmental shop stewards' committee may form a smaller unit which is easier to relate to. The departmental shop stewards' committee also gives opportunities to take on positions such as chair, secretary and minutes secretary. It can thus provide a training ground for later taking on office in the branch. The role of departmental shop stewards committees should also be considered in relation to theories linking job content and union involvement, since a departmentally based committee is well placed to address issues of relevance to workers in particular occupations and work situations, and may also to some degree operate within the same organisational culture as the department it represents.

The study of the operation of departmental shop stewards' committees is important for both the sociology of industrial relations and the sociology of organizations. It is an under-researched area in terms of explaining union participation and organisation. Given the extent to which many shop stewards are reluctant union office-holders, the degree to which support is available from a well organised shop stewards' committee may be an important factor in willingness to take on the shop steward role. The co-ordination role of shop stewards' committees depends upon a number of factors concerning provision of union facilities and sometimes geographical location. Terry (1982) notes that for many local government shop stewards one of the main organisational problems arose from the physical dispersion of the workforce on many work sites, so that shop stewards had to spend a considerable amount of time keeping in touch with constituents by telephone or by driving around. He also notes the different levels of involvement of full-time officials. In the case of the blue-collar unions in local government full-time officials were much more involved than they were in the case of the white-collar unions, such as NALGO, where the lay officers preferred to do more of the negotiating.

The relation between the development of a shop steward system and increased levels of workplace or departmental level bargaining is identified in two studies of the development of the shop steward system in various NALGO branches (Linn 1977, Ayland 1980). The branches in which the shop steward system was most successful were ones in which activists were able to make the transition from being departmental

representatives, who did not have a negotiating role, to shop stewards, who did undertake negotiating. Both authors also note the influence of the proximity of a strong manual union culture in encouraging the development of a shop steward system, a factor also present in the case of the Sheffield NALGO branch, whose history is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

2.3 The Context of Sheffield

2.3 a Changes in the Sheffield Labour Market

During the 1970s and 1980s employment in Sheffield was affected by the decline of manufacturing industry. The dominance of steel and engineering was reduced, with the closure of many small engineering factories and the loss of jobs in steel, especially following the steel strike of 1980. Jobs developed in the tertiary sector, in retail and leisure industries, although many of these were part-time jobs. The opening of the Meadowhall shopping complex on the outskirts of Sheffield in September 1990 was a notable example of this type of growth in employment. At first public sector employment in local government seemed relatively immune to job losses. Sheffield City Council became increasingly important as the largest employer in the city. The City Council had a 'no redundancy' policy and a commitment to maintain levels of employment. During the latter part of the 1980s these commitments became increasingly difficult for the Council to sustain, with legal requirements to put Council services out to tender and reductions in local authority expenditure through rate capping. By 1990 the difficulties in collecting the poll tax and government limits on Council expenditure had produced a serious budget crisis. In October 1990 63,000 people in Sheffield had not paid their poll tax bills, which fell due the previous April. The Council estimated that by 1991 it could face a £35 million shortfall in the

budget and would have to implement major cuts in jobs and services (Sheffield City Council News October 1990).

These changes in the patterns of employment produced changes in the structure of the working class of Sheffield. An increasing proportion of workers were employed in white-collar and tertiary sector jobs. The social consequences of increased levels of unemployment became increasingly a matter of concern for local government, affecting the work of various Council departments. The formation by the Council of a Department of Employment, later renamed the Department of Employment and Economic Development, to address issues of employment and job creation in the city is an indication of these changes. The Council, and especially the Department of Employment and Economic Development, attempted to develop a number of partnerships with the private sector to create employment and economic regeneration. It decided to hold the World Student Games in Sheffield in 1991 and invested in a number of sports facilities. These projects encountered a substantial degree of criticism within both the Labour Party and the trade unions in Sheffield, partly over the issue of accountability of public money in partnership arrangements with the private sector, and partly over the desirability of expanding employment in leisure and retail sectors rather than in manufacturing. Traditionally Sheffield as a city, and its labour movement, had been built around the steel and engineering industries. Employment in these industries, while often arduous and hazardous, had been to a considerable degree

skilled, permanent and highly unionised. Many of the newly-created jobs in the retail and leisure industries were part-time and temporary, often required little or no training, and were frequently non-unionised.

2.3 b Changes in the Sheffield Labour Movement

The changes in the structure of employment in Sheffield had implications for the composition of the labour movement. In some areas of employment the jobs which developed were part-time and temporary jobs, the types of jobs unions have traditionally found difficult to organise. Membership of engineering and steel unions declined with the loss of jobs in these industries. Public sector and white-collar unions were seen by many union officials in these sectors as relatively immune from these changes. These changes could be identified in the delegate composition of the Sheffield Trades Council. The NALGO Sheffield Local Government Branch has become the largest single delegation to the Trades Council.

Along with the changing composition of the Labour movement went the decline of the traditional left, based on the Labour Group in Council, the Communist Party (which had long dominated the AEU District Committee) the Labour Party and the Co-operative Movement. This traditional left had long practised a form of socialist paternalism, with the Labour Council carrying out socialist

policies on behalf of the people of Sheffield, rather than mobilising the population in support of those policies. The collapse of the campaign against rate-capping in the mid 1980s meant that the Council was forced to recognise that it could no longer carry out socialist policies in opposition to the central government and that it would, however reluctantly, have to impose cuts in jobs and services. Sheffield City Council increasingly looked to alliances with the private sector to provide employment and economic regeneration in the city. This orientation was the subject of much criticism within the Sheffield labour movement. This process, together with the end of the so-called 'Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire' and its cheap fares policy, which occurred with the abolition of the county council, led to a situation in which increasingly open conflicts developed between the Council and its workforce. Weinstein (1986) discusses this process in relation to several Labour councils including Sheffield, although to define it in the Sheffield case as a collapse of a 'new left' would not be entirely accurate. This is because the Labour Council when led by David Blunkett from 1980 until 1987 was still based to a considerable extent on the 'old left' of the Labour Party and trades unions.

2.3.c The Positive Action Research Project

In 1984 a Positive Action Report was produced on Council employment in Sheffield. The Council established a one-year positive action research project following proposals from a Labour Party Policy Working Party on Employment. In Sheffield the District Labour Party (DLP) had set up various policy working parties to involve party members in writing the DLP manifesto for the local elections. Formally the Labour Group on the Council considered itself accountable to the District Labour Party and often DLP meetings were held the evening before the Labour Group met to decide how councillors were to vote on particular issues. Socialist-feminists in the Labour Party, who were also active in the Working Women's Charter Sub-committee of the Sheffield Trades Council, pushed the idea of a positive action project through the Policy Working Party in order to take forward the issue of positive action in Council employment.

The Positive Action Report indicated that the Local Authority in 1984 had a workforce of approximately 32,000 employees of whom 7,500 were white-collar workers in APT&C (Administrative, Professional, Technical and Clerical) grades, and so eligible for NALGO membership. There was a closed shop agreement which required all Council employees to join a trade union. The vast majority of white-collar staff were in NALGO, although a few opted to join APEX or MATSA, an action characterised by the NALGO shop stewards

interviewed for this research as a way of being in a union without being in a union, i.e. they believed these individuals if they could chose would not be union members at all. The presence at the time of the research of a union membership agreement meant that all Council employees had to belong to a trade union.

The 1984 Positive Action Report (Stone 1984) found that the vast majority of the 4,500 women clerical workers were on scales 1-4, the four lowest grades for APT&C staff. This was the situation of 3,500 women, who comprised 80% of the female APT&C workforce. There was a real gap between the theory of the Council as an equal opportunity employer and the reality of Council employment practices. The situation of women manual workers was even worse than that of white-collar workers, with cleaners particularly commenting that they felt stereotyped and stuck in low-paid, low-status cleaning jobs. Black women fared especially badly in Council employment. There were very few black women working for the Council and most of these were in unskilled manual jobs. Stone's research demonstrates the gulf between the Sheffield City Council' s policy commitments to equal opportunities, with a comprehensive policy and code of practice on equal opportunities, adopted in 1981, and the reality of its employment structure. This background is relevant to theories of union participation which explain it in terms of attachment to work and job seniority.

Since the Positive Action Report was produced in 1984 a number of studies have been produced which have indicated the limitations of equal opportunities employment policies (Jewson and Mason 1986, Webb and Liff 1988, O'Donnell and Hall 1988, Cockburn 1989, Nelson 1990 and Aitkenhead and Liff 1991), all of which recognise that the adoption of a formal bureaucratic equal opportunity appointment and promotion procedure does not necessarily produce any major changes in patterns of occupational segregation. Indeed O'Donnell and Hall argue that wage policies aimed at narrowing pay differentials may do far more to improve the situation of the majority of women workers.

2.3.d The History of the Sheffield NALGO Local Government Branch

The Sheffield NALGO Local Government Branch is a long-established NALGO branch, whose development has been influenced by the proximity of strong blue-collar union organisation. Linn (1977) notices a similar influence in a study of NALGO branches in Glasgow and Coventry. One of the key indicators of the blue-collar influence was the adoption of a shop steward system. As the Sheffield branch service conditions officer put it:-

"The shop steward system was actually introduced in the early seventies as a response by the branch at that time, to try and bring the union closer to the membership. Up until then only certain branch officers had the authority to negotiate with the Council on a wide variety of issues ... members in those days had to go on a committee and argue at that committee that their grievance should be taken up by the union before it was actually

pursued by the relevant branch officer, and people found that unacceptable and they found the union too remote from the membership, so they felt that what NALGO should adopt, and they pioneered it in Sheffield, was a shop steward system which was by and large drawn from shop steward systems which existed in manual worker areas." (my underlining).

This statement shows that the adoption of a shop steward system was both the result of the influence of blue-collar unionism and a response to a perceived need to make the union less remote from the membership, i.e. to develop a form of union organisation based more directly on membership activity. The main difference between the role of shop stewards and the role of the departmental representatives in the previous system was that shop stewards were intended to have a negotiating responsibility, so that negotiations and industrial action would be devolved from branch to departmental level. This change had been achieved with varying degrees of success in the different departmental shop stewards' committees. The NALGO shop stewards' committee in Family and Community Services was generally mentioned in interview, by both its supporters and its critics, to be the best organised shop stewards' committee. One of its long-standing shop stewards described its working as follows:-

"I think the shop stewards system within F&CS works how the shop steward system is meant to work and therefore a lot of the responsibility is devolved to the shop stewards' committee. ...When the shop steward system was originally introduced ...the idea was that the branch officers devolve responsibility for negotiations to shop stewards and shop stewards committees. In F&CS we deal with all our negotiations ourself, and the branch is rarely brought in, occasionally for advice when we are taking things into the higher levels of procedures and occasionally if there are issues around shop stewards and mainly when the potential for industrial action is taking place."

The Sheffield NALGO branch was the first one to introduce a shop steward system, in 1974 (Nicholson, Ursell and Blyton 1981). In 1977 the NALGO Annual Conference approved the establishment nationally of a shop steward system, but the implementation process was left largely to the branches (Ayland 1980). In this sense Ayland contrasts it with the introduction of a shop steward system in NUPE (National Union of Public Employees) where the responsibility for introducing the system was given to the full-time officials.

The Nalgo Action Group, a left-wing pressure group within NALGO, had earlier campaigned for the introduction of the shop steward system. While its introduction in the Sheffield branch should not be put down to this influence, the branch was generally on the left within NALGO. It was a fairly radical branch and debates tended to be within the left, rather than between right and left. The branch executive officer explained the political differences in the branch as arising largely from different situations. Some departments were facing issues of enforced tendering and privatisation and so had to engage in competitive tendering, while other departments were still waging more traditional anti-cuts campaigns. He summed it up as:-

"It's differences on the left I would say ... I mean given Sheffield branch you'd be hard-pressed to describe it as any other than a left-wing branch ... So on the issues in many other unions you'd have a battle with the right-wing, all that's took for granted in this branch, no one would oppose it."

One noticeable evidence of the radicalism of the Sheffield NALGO Local Government Branch was the presence of an international relations sub-committee. This sub-committee was responsible for organising twinning arrangments with trade union branches in other countries and collecting for various international solidarity campaigns. In 1989 the branch also started organising an international week , with speakers, exhibitions and a social evening, which became a successful annual event.

The political issues facing the branch in the late 1980s and early 1990s were concerned with the contradictions and crisis of municipal socialism. Increasing tensions and conflicts developed between the Council and its workforce especially in the Departments of Housing and F&CS. Weinstein's national analysis of these conflicts applies clearly to the case of Sheffield. Trade unionists were increasingly forced to confront political issues, such as rate-capping, the poll tax and the quality of services provided. This process was particularly acute in high-stress areas such as Housing and Family and Community Services, which had to deal with various aspects of the emerging social crisis. Political conflicts and dilemmas were also evidenced over various aspects of Council employment policy, such as the move towards single status (the provision of common procedures and terms of employment for all Council employees) which could be interpreted as an attack on white-collar trade unionism. At times the Council and its workforce were on the same side politically, for instance in the

case of symbolic strikes against rate-cappping, but at other times they were clearly in conflict.

2.3.e The New Technology Dispute

In 1984 there was a major dispute over the introduction of new technology. This dispute involved extended strike action over a period of 13 weeks, when the Authority attempted unilaterally to impose a new procedure for the introduction of new technology. Strike action was taken by a number of key workers, including staff in the Data Preparation section in the Treasury and staff in Housing and F&CS. The action culminated in a new agreement entitled "Responding to Change" which introduced a number of procedures which NALGO subsequently found advantageous.

Informants described the outcome of the dispute as follows:-

"Basically we negotiated some of it in fine detail, although in essence they imposed it, and now they're regretting it, I think, because we use it and they don't like it very much."

"It imposes conditions on management that they don't like more than ones on us which we don't like."

As this statement shows the dispute was not only about new technology, but about procedures regarding organisational change. There was an important gender dimension to the dispute, given the involvement of women workers in the use of new technology. The

agreement produced substantial changes in the working situation of women workers in Data Preparation and ended the situation where any worker spent her whole day in-putting data. Work had to be redesigned to provide workers with a variety of work assignments. The issue of working with new technology initially affected women workers most, but one of the female shop stewards from the Data Preparation Section of the Treasury Department indicated how these aspects of work were now affecting all workers, who were now coming to see the relevance of the dispute.

"There were staff in Treasury who didn't believe we should be out on strike, and there was a bit of bad feeling when we did go back to work, especially because we had this agreement for balanced work, and then Data Prep staff were going out into sections within Treasury and we were also getting like a half hour tea break every two hours, things like this, and it didn't go down well with a lot of Treasury staff, but I think now that they are having to use the new technology they are learning to appreciate what we had to put up with years ago."

The agreement reached at the end of the dispute also brought other substantial benefits for women workers. For instance it included the right for all workers who were pregnant or thought they might be pregnant to withdraw from work with VDUs, which was a major gain for women workers in terms of health and safety. For some women shop stewards too the dispute involved a high level of involvement in union organising and a rapid education in union work.

2.3.f Rate-capping and the Poll Tax

Spoor's work (1967) on the role of NALGO in creating the profession of local government officer shows the ideological commitment of NALGO to local government. Support for the principle of local government logically means support for mechanisms of raising public expenditure to finance local government, such as the right of the council to set rates without interference from central government. The issue of local government finance is both an economic and a political issue for NALGO members. Thus the Sheffield NALGO branch supported the Council in campaigns against rate-capping to the extent of taking strike action when called upon by David Blunkett as Leader of the Council. A degree of demoralisation and cynicism followed the collapse of the campaign against rate-capping as Labour Councils moved towards setting balanced budgets which implied cuts and job losses. NALGO members felt that the Council's redeployment processes worked out better for manual workers, who were sometimes redeployed into white-collar jobs. There were fears expressed in interviews of cuts in administrative jobs which were seen as non-essential compared to defending 'front-line' services. The practical outcome of this policy, however, was that some providers of 'front-line' services, such as social workers ended up doing more of the administrative work and less direct work with clients.

The poll tax presented a much sharper threat to local government services and employment. It also produced more substantial political/departmental divisions within NALGO. These focused around attitudes towards non-payment and non-collection of the tax. NALGO members in the Treasury Department decided to implement the poll tax because they were faced with loss of jobs in the rates section, since work assessing and collecting rates would cease. One of the leading shop stewards in the Treasury Department explained their position as follows:-

"Our shop stewards' committee is very unpopular in the branch because we have been representing our members and what you have to remember is that we had a Rating Section that now doesn't exist any more and the members in there were obviously, if we hadn't introduced the poll tax, would have been without a job, and certainly there were three branch meetings called specifically to debate poll tax motions at which we had perhaps 250 of our 500 members attending in their own time, and only by that method did the branch agree to implement the poll tax."

In the Housing Department NALGO members were opposed to undertaking work in connection with the poll tax because they did not want to encounter the public hatred likely to arise from asking people questions about how many people were living in their house and what their relationship to each other was. Those involved in Housing Benefits and related areas also felt that to do this work would radically change their relationship with their clients, since much information received from clients had traditionally been treated as confidential. Thus representing the interests of their members and being accountable to their constituency led shop stewards in Housing on the one hand, and in the Treasury on the other, to adopt

diametrically opposed points of view in relation to the poll tax. Such conflicts can be understood in terms of the size of the branch and the nature of the work in these very different departments, as well as political differences between the shop stewards in Housing and in Treasury. The account given by one of the leading shop stewards in Housing focuses on the trade union rather than the directly political reasons for their members' hostility towards the poll tax. She stated:-

"Well in terms of the poll tax work the Housing Department probably gets hit by it more than any other department. ... The Council has decided that the Housing Department are to collect it and to administer the rebates. I think the general feeling is summed up by the kinds of resolutions that get passed by the departmental staff, which are along the lines of they don't like the poll tax, they are opposed to it, but haven't enough confidence to fight it on direct political lines like that, also that's underpinned by the fact that the union nationally at its last two conferences has said that it won't do that, but where anger starts flaring up like this half day strike that we had a couple of weeks ago, where our service conditions and [job] descriptions, the way that we work started to be affected by the poll tax and because what was intended was to increase our workload phenomenally, not to put enough staff in, to expect us to grass on the claimants again were something that people working in the section are angry about because our job has always been one of treating people in confidentiality, and these were the driving reasons of the strike."

2.4 Developments in the Trade Union Movement

2.4.a Trade Union Policies on Women's Rights

During the 1970s and early 1980s many trade unions developed policies and issued pamphlets on equal rights for women (e.g. General and Municipal Workers Union 1976, Society of Civil and Public Servants 1982). Many unions too have supported working parties and research into the position of women in the industry and the union (Fryer, Fairclough and Manson 1978, NALGO Equal Rights Working Party 1975, NALGO Equal Rights Survey 1980, Rees and Reed 1981, Ledwith, Colgan, Joyce and Hayes 1990). In this section the development of trade union policies on women's rights is explored under four sub-headings: (i) equal pay, (ii) the Working Women's Charter Campaign, (iii) abortion rights and (iv) positive action. These changes arose in part from the increasing number of women in trade unions, from feminist campaigning within the union, increases in the number of women holding union office and the impact of European Economic Community laws and the discussion around the proposed Social Charter (NALGO and the European Network of Women not dated).

2.4.a (i) Equal Pay

It is widely accepted in the trade union movement that its record in fighting for equal pay for women has not been commendable, with

little action following the adoption of a resolution in 1888 at the TUC calling for equal pay. The attachment of many trade unions to the concept of the family wage (Barrett and McIntosh 1980) undermined their ability to fight effectively for equal pay, and it is noteworthy that the unions which achieved equal pay earliest for their members (unions representing teachers and civil servants) were ones which had traditionally organised single women workers, because of the existence of a marriage bar in teaching and the civil service between the two World Wars (Lewenhak 1977, Beale 1982, Boston 1987).

The 1968 strike of Ford's Machinists at Dagenham was a dispute over pay grading, which became an equal pay dispute and led to the passing of the 1970 Equal Pay Act (Friedman and Meredeen 1980). When the Equal Pay Act came into force at the end of 1975 many tribunal cases were taken on equal pay and a few significant strikes occurred, such as at Trico-Folberth. The Ford's machinists eventually achieved their desired regrading in 1986, sixteen years after the original dispute, following the passing of the Equal Pay Amendment Act at the end of 1984, an independent enquiry and a further strike.

The actions by many trade unions in supporting members taking equal value cases (e.g. the GMB (General, Municipal and Boilermakers Union) and Julie Hayward versus Cammell Laird) showed the continuing significance of the equal pay issue for women workers. Similarly in the U.S.A. the issue of pay equity has been the most important women's issue in the public sector unions (Bell 1985, Baden 1986).

In Britain the complexity of the equal value regulations means that an equal value case can take several years to resolve, and so taking up equal pay via collective bargaining can still be a more effective and attractive option for women workers (Labour Research Department 1989, NUPE not dated).

What is significant in trade unions' record over the issues of equal pay and low pay has been their willingness to rely on the law and to permit legal intervention in women's wages (trade boards and wages councils) and hours of work. As Boston (1987) notes, the tradition of voluntarism and the belief of unions in free collective bargaining has never applied to women workers. Nonetheless the equal pay victories at Ford's and at Trico-Folberth were achieved by women workers through taking industrial action.

2.4.a (ii) The Working Women's Charter Campaign

Leman (1980) notes in her study of the development of the women's rights work of ACTT, NALGO and NATFHE that unions tended to be concerned with equal pay for a very long period before they developed a wider agenda on women's rights. One development in the 1970s which contributed to a qualitative widening of trades unions' agenda on women's rights was the Working Women's Charter Campaign. The Working Women's Charter was a ten-point programme on women's rights at work and in society, which was adopted by a sub-committee of the London

Trades Council in 1974. It was never formally adopted by the whole Trades Council because it was re-organised before it took a position on the Charter. What was innovatory about the Working Women's Charter was the linking of demands relating to the workplace and to women's position in society generally, thus widening the traditional trade union agenda on women's rights and to some degree incorporating a feminist analysis of women's inequality at work.

The Working Women's Charter was adopted as policy by many trades councils and trade unions, often following conferences discussing its demands (Lawrence 1977, Boston 1987). NALGO adopted it as policy at its 1975 Conference (Leman 1980). The 1975 TUC Conference did not adopt the Charter, because of objections at that time to the principle of a minimum national wage, although a later version of the Charter was issued by the TUC. There was also some objection to the Charter because it referred to abortion rights, although the same Conference had also adopted policy opposing the James White Anti-Abortion Bill (Hunt and Adams 1980, Cockburn 1984). The principle of a national minimum wage was supported by TUC congresses in the late 1980s, particularly advocated by unions such as NUPE which represent many low-paid women workers. The change in policy on the national minimum wage question arose not simply as a result of greater trade union sensitivity to women's demands, however, but also as a result of the weakened bargaining position of many unions.

2.4.a (iii) Abortion Rights

The debates over abortion rights in the unions in the late 1970s established the principle that abortion was a trade union issue. Many unions at branch, regional and national level adopted policies opposing anti-abortion legislation and supporting the defence of the 1967 Abortion Act and the principle of women's right to choose. NALGO passed a resolution to this effect at its 1978 Annual Conference (NALGO Campaigning for a woman's right to choose, not dated). In 1979 the TUC called a demonstration against the Corrie Anti-abortion Bill. This was the first time in the world that a major trade union federation had called a demonstration on abortion rights (Beale 1982). More recently in 1989 in the USA there were demonstrations against any moves in the Supreme Court to reverse Roe versus Wade, the legal case which in practice allowed abortion on request in the first trimester, with labour unionists participating in the demonstrations carrying placards saying "Pro-union, Pro-choice".

Seven trade unions in Britain including NALGO are affiliated to the National Abortion Campaign, a pro-choice organisation set up in 1975 to oppose the James White Abortion (Amendment) Bill which aimed to restrict the operation of the 1967 Abortion Act. Trade union support was also strong in the 1987/8 campaign against the Alton Bill, with many unions issuing leaflets and posters for lobbies and demonstrations and financing coaches, enabling members to attend

demonstrations. Support for women's abortion rights was an important development in union policies on women's rights, since it involved explicit recognition that women could not be equal in the workplace without fertility control. It was a culmination of the development of an understanding that the trade union agenda had to incorporate demands relating to women's position in society as well as in the workplace, for real equality for women to be achieved. This was to some degree the result of the debates which had taken place in the unions around the Working Women's Charter and feminist ideas generally.

2.4.a (iv) Positive Action

Increasing union interest in the concept of positive action arose both from an appreciation that legislation (the 1970 Equal Pay Act, the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act, the 1984 Equal Pay Amendment Act and the 1986 Sex Discrimination Amendment Act) had done little to raise the level of women's pay or to gain entry for women into better-paid and better-quality jobs, and from studying the U.S experience of affirmative action (Labour Research Department 1988). Affirmative action in the U.S.A. permits preferential hiring of women and ethnic minorities and the use of quotas in employment. The TUC in 1980 held a conference on Positive Action and adopted policy positions in support of it (TUC 1986). Many individual unons too adopted policies in support of positive action (Banking Insurance and Finance Union

Equality for Women Proposals for Positive Action, not dated, NALGO Equal Opportunities: NALGO's guide to positive action in local government, not dated).

At the end of the 1970s and in the 1980s there was an increasing focus on equal opportunities as a negotiating issue. After a decade of feminist campaigning within the unions to persuade fellow union members of the justice and importance of various policies on women's rights, there developed an increasing recognition that progressive policies on equal rights needed to be turned into collective agreements. This in turn led to the understanding of the need for more women lay officers and full-time officials and for a higher level of involvement of female members in the negotiating work of the union. Beale (1982) notes the virtual absence of women from national negotiations. Women's proportionate representation in the union movement came to be seen not simply as an issue of fairness and representativeness, but also as important in terms of bargaining effectiveness. This meant too that women need to be in union posts concerned with collective bargaining as well as policy-making, educational and welfare work where women had tended to be concentrated. The significance of an increasing number of women full-time officials being employed by trade unions has been explored by Heery and Kelly (1988b) who conclude that many women full-time officials, as well as a significant minority of male full-time officials, do attach a higher level of priority to women's issues in collective bargaining.

2.4.b Women's Representation in the Trade Union Movement

2.4.b (i) Increase in numbers of women trade unionists

Women in 1990 were 34% of the membership of TUC affiliated unions and 48% of the employed workforce (Labour Research Department 1991). Underlying the changes in policies on women's rights has been the growth in female membership of trades unions. Cockburn (1987) states that the number of women trade union members grew from 1.7 million in 1968 to 3.5 million in 1978. This development affected some unions dramatically. Hunt and Adams (1980) indicate that a number of unions between 1968 and 1978 experienced a rapid growth in female membership, most noticeably ASTMS, where female membership increased by 721%. For NALGO during this period female membership increased by 141%.

At the level of trades union federations these changes were noticed and the need to develop policies appreciated. For instance in 1978 the Executive Board of the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) adopted a programme "Equality for Women in Trade Unions: A Programme of Action for the Integration of Women into Trade Union Organisations". In 1985 this programme was updated by the ICFTU's Women's Committee. It emphasises the responsibilities of unions to encourage women's participation, for example by convenient timing of union meetings, and to take steps to ensure that women are given adequate access to union training and are properly represented on union executives.

In 1979 the British TUC adopted a "Charter for Equality for Women within Trade Unions". A 1984 TUC pamphlet incorporating this charter addressed the same issues in some detail. It included guidelines on seeing that women are adequately represented on union executives, that advisory committees on women's issues are established, that meetings are held at times convenient for parents or that childcare is provided at meetings, and that the content of union journals and publications must be presented in a non-sexist way. The TUC Charter was updated in 1990 to include targets and if necessary quotas for proportionate representation of women on union decision-making bodies (Labour Research Department 1991). Within the European Economic Community there has been increased interest on the part of the European TUC and various trade union federations to increase women's representation, but there has also been some opposition to special measures such as reserved places and women are still under-represented (Labour Research Department 1990b).

2.4.b (ii) Actions to overcome barriers to participation

For many unions these constituted one of the main starting points for improving women's participation in the union. The barriers identified were often childcare/domestic responsibilities and sexism within the unions. In many cases these battles were won, to provide creches at union meetings or to pay babysitting expenses where more appropriate. Where possible unions attempted to hold meetings in

working hours, but a union generally has to be in a strong bargaining position to persuade an employer to allow paid time off work for union meetings. As Beale (1982) notes, holding the union meeting in the lunch hour does not necessarily assist women's participation, if they usually use the lunch hour to do shopping.

Sometimes too the venue of a union meeting has been identified as a barrier to women's participation. Many women do not feel comfortable attending meetings in public houses or in certain parts of town which are unsafe to walk in or travel to by public transport especially after dark. There has been some growing awareness on the part of unions that such practices need changing, but they still occur. The type of venue adjourned to after the meeting may also be significant. In 1974 (before the passing of the Sex Discrimination Act) as a representative from Newcastle Working Women's Charter Group I went to speak to a meeting of the Newcastle Branch of the Inland Revenue Staff Federation. It was an evening meeting held in union offices in the centre of Newcastle. Two women members were present at an overwhelmingly male meeting. The male members of the branch were genuinely keen to encourage more women to be active in the union. Unfortunately, however, it was the practice of the male members of that branch after the meeting to adjourn to a men-only public house. What was interesting was that they made no connection between this practice and the lack of women at the branch meetings.

Various measures were taken to overcome overt sexism in the conduct of union business, for instance many unions rewrote their rule books, deleting reference to the member as 'he' and instead using non-sexist and inclusive language. NALGO did this in 1982. NALGO also issued a leaflet "Watch Your Language", giving practical guidance on how to avoid sexist language at work and in the conduct of union meetings. This leaflet acknowledges that in the past NALGO publications were guilty of various sexist practices, for instance the NALGO magazine 'Public Service' used to have a "Prettiest New Recruit" competition, a practice which was discontinued in 1975 (NALGO Watch Your Language: Non-sexist language; a guide for NALGO members, not dated).

2.4.b (iii) Developing women's rights structures within the unions

During the 1970s and 1980s in many unions women's rights committees at national, regional and local levels were established or reactivated. This arose partly as a result of feminist pressures within the unions, partly as a result of the increasing female membership of unions and partly perhaps from some unions' desire to recruit more women members. Within NALGO in March 1977 the NEC (National Executive Committee) set up a National Discrimination Committee, which later became renamed the National Equal Opportunities Committee. It had fifteen members, three from the NEC and one from each of the twelve districts. By 1979 district equal opportunities committees had been set up in twelve districts. The

National Equal Opportunities Committee met four times a year and campaigned on childcare, equality of opportunity and monitoring progress on the implementation of the 1975 Equal Rights Working Party Report (Leman 1980). In 1988 NALGO re-organised its equal opportunities work to establish four national committees, one for women members, one for members with disabilities, one for lesbian and gay members, and one for black and ethnic minority members (NALGO News 25 November 1988).

In Britain space was made for women within the official structures, with many unions creating new advisory structures to consider policy issues of specific interest to women members (Hunt and Adams 1980). In the USA the absence of such provision led to the formation of CLUW (Coalition of Labor Union Women) outside the official union structure, as discussed in Section 2.2.b of this chapter. There was also the development of pre-union organisations, such as the National Organisation of Working Women: 9 to 5, as mentioned earlier, one of whose groups later became Local 925 affiliated to Service Employees International Union (Burton 1987).

2.4.b (iv) Encouraging women's participation and representation

Along with the establishment of policy structures to deal with women's rights issues went an increased concern to promote union office-holding by women. Unions recognised that their arguments to

employers for equal opportunities were not very credible if the unions were as male-dominated as the employment structures they were criticising. Some unions also undertook equal opportunities monitoring of women's levels of office-holding within the union.

In 1991 the Labour Research Department published a survey of women's representation in 37 unions, covering 93% of the membership of TUC affiliated unions (Labour Research Department 1991). It found that while women were 34% of trade union members, they were only 20% of national executive committee members, 23% of conference delegates, 21% of TUC delegations and 20% of national full-time officials. In the case of NALGO women were 53.1% of union members, 42% of the national executive, 41.7% of the TUC delegation and 31.6% of national full-time officials. All these figures for representation indicated an increase from the 1985 statistics (Labour Research Department 1991).

Many unions accordingly established reserved places for women on executive bodies and delegations, using a positive action quota system to make sure that women's representation was increased. Currently there are twelve reserved places for women on the TUC General Council, NUPE (National Union of Public Employees) has five reserved places for women on its national executive, GMB (General Municipal and Boilermakers Union) ten reserved places and MSF (Manufacturing Science and Finance Union) four. The TGWU has eleven reserved places on its TUC and Labour Party delegations. NALGO does

not have reserved places on its national executive, but 42% of its national executive is composed of women members. The 1975 Equal Opportunities Working Party of NALGO opposed reserved places in principle (Leman 1980).

There are arguments for and against reserved places. Some trade unionists, both male and female, argue that reserved places are undemocratic, in that all members should have an equal chance of election and voters should not be required to vote for a minimum number of women candidates; they can also be seen as patronising because women can and ought to get elected on their own merits. Other trade unionists, male and female, argue that reserved places should be supported, at least on a temporary basis, as a necessary measure to overcome prejudice and to ensure adequate representation of women within unions. My own personal experience as a past National Council member of NATFHE from the Yorkshire and Humberside Region is that technically I was elected to a reserved woman's place, but in fact I and the other holder of the other reserved woman's place both polled first and second place in the regional election for two years running, and so would have been elected anyway. Nonetheless I still feel there is a case for reserved places because it cannot be guaranteed in all areas of the trade union movement that a reasonable proportion of women will be elected. Without this representation it is less likely that women's concerns will be taken up by elected bodies or dealt with effectively.

Besides the use of reserved places unions have employed a number of strategies to increase women's participation, such as women-only training courses, publicity, and prioritisation of bargaining issues of particular interest to women. While women are still under-represented in union office-holders, especially at the more senior levels, in many unions enough women are in a position of influence to make sure that women's demands are less neglected than they have been in the past.

During the 1970s and 1980s NALGO was one of the unions most affected by these changes in the position of women in the union movement. The increase in women members' involvement in the union meant that women played a prominent part in the 1989 NALGO National Strike and appreciated the significance of defending national pay bargaining for low-paid workers.

2.4.c The 1989 NALGO National Strike

In 1989 for the first time in its history NALGO took national strike action. This was seen by many activists as a qualitative step forward, a 'coming of age' as a trade union. The issue of the dispute was one which unified the NALGO membership, the defence of national conditions of service and national pay bargaining. The dispute took place in a context of rising industrial militancy in which there was also industrial action by rail workers and a

relatively successful, albeit unpublicised, fight for the 35 hour week in the engineering industry. The tactics adopted by NALGO in the strike were largely successful. These consisted of an escalating programme of national stoppages of one day, two day and three days strikes and then selective strike action, with key workers withdrawn from work.

A general question was asked near the end of the interviews about the effects the national strike action of Summer 1989 had had on the branch. Most interviewees stressed the positive aspects of the action, increases in union membership, new activists coming forward, the recruitment of new shop stewards and a relatively favourable outcome. For instance, one of the leading shop stewards in Housing commented:-

"We've had five new stewards come in as a result of the Summer strike".

In a number of cases shop stewards commented that they were surprised at the resolution shown by members who had not traditionally been active in the union. One of the union officers from the Education Department observed that the issue of keeping national negotiations on salaries and service conditions was seen as particularly important by the low-paid women workers in her department. She said:-

"In the past when we've had disputes in this Authority that have affected the Education Department it's been quite difficult to persuade people to take any sort of action in support of other members. It wasn't difficult to persuade them this year that they

should come out on strike. What really brought them out on strike was not the money but it was the strings attached, that was what brought them out. Their national negotiations, they still wanted to retain those and it proved to be quite easy to bring them out and to keep them out. ... I think because they are badly paid and they can't see themselves getting any further forward, however hard you try, then other things become very important, and national negotiations I think they saw as a very important issue to them, because they do know that NALGO was trying however badly we do it to try and eradicate low pay, to try and move them up. And I think they thought any nationally agreed rates of pay are much more important than anything you can negotiate locally."

This quotation shows both the way in which traditionally non-active union members can become involved in a dispute, and also the way in which the issues of low pay and preserving national bargaining can be perceived as relevant by low-paid women workers. Indeed another shop steward commented that the theme of defence of national bargaining was vital in achieving the majority for strike action. She said:-

"People recognised that the strike was primarily not about pay, it was about national conditions of service. ... My view is that is if they balloted just on pay then people would have accepted the offer that was given on the first stage, but people voted against, people rejected the offer because of the strings that were attached to it."

In the case of the Land and Planning Department too, one of the shop stewards commented on the effectiveness of the action. This department was predominantly male in composition and had far more higher graded posts than Education, but had perhaps comparable levels of union organisation. He stated:-

It was a milestone, people who had never even considered that they would ever be involved in a strike found themselves either out on strike or not in the office or even after the one day action which everyone was involved with, they went on to the key workers who were out on strike. They'd come to work and find their colleagues in the

next office had all disappeared and work was piling up and there were people coming round who had said 'Well look I voted no in the ballot, but it's great this, the whole place is dead.' The idea quite appealed to them, so it certainly faced people with the reality of what we're having to do in a way that was never the case before."

In this department key workers who processed planning applications were withdrawn, causing "absolute chaos".

There were, however, also observations concerning the loss to the union of some members who did not want to take industrial action, the relapse into inactivity of many members when the dispute was ended, and the limited nature of the victory. So while the overall assessments of the dispute were positive, they were far from unreflective or uncritical. Among the more critical observations, which tended to come from male interviewees, were the following:-

During the dispute we had a massive response from every type of member we've got, I mean really wonderful. The atmosphere was brilliant. We could ask people to do anything. People took on jobs and didn't think twice about it, really extremely good, brilliant atmosphere. That no doubt contributed to the success of the outcome of the pay negotiations, but I suppose activists like me after it expected this to throw up new people and we'd be flooded with people to get on with things, and it's been the reverse. Although we've got some people who took on stewards' jobs and one or two new branch officers, it's been really flat. It's as though people have said to themselves 'Well we did a good job there, put a lot of effort in, but now I'm going away for a rest.'"

This observation shows the difficulties trade unions face in sustaining high levels of membership activism outside the context of a major dispute, and the episodic nature of union involvement for many members. The following statement is even more cautious in assessing the gains of the dispute, arguing that it was largely a

defensive struggle and that repulsing an employer offensive is not in itself a victory for the trade union movement.

"It wasn't a massive victory, a pay increase level with inflation and putting off the dismantling of national conditions; but that's not a great step forward, but as a defensive position it was a major achievement."

The interview material suggests that the dispute had a marked short-term effect on the branch, while the long-term effect, although positive in developing union activism, was more limited.

2.4.d The Future of NALGO and Proposed Mergers

At the time of the interviews in 1889-90 there was considerable discussion among NALGO activists of the possible merger between NALGO and NUPE and COHSE. Union mergers have been a major feature of the recent history of the trade union movement. The tendency to merger arises partly from changing patterns of employment, partly from a desire for economies of scale and partly from a desire for unity as a way of enhancing the bargaining position of trade unions. The problems of unions in the 1980s and 90s have been well documented (McIlroy 1988), covering areas such as loss of members, employer opposition and a difficult climate for collective bargaining. These problems did not affect unions organising in the public services to the same degree as unions in the private sector or in industries such as steel and coal-mining, largely because they lost fewer members.

Nonetheless public service unions faced problems arising from changes in the financing of public services, compulsory tendering, privatisation and government opposition to national pay bargaining.

Much of the literature on trade union mergers (Buchanan 1985, Undy, Ellis, McCarthy and Halmos 1985, Waddington 1988) suggests that trade union mergers occur and work well if satisfactory career arrangements can be worked out for the full-time officials of the unions involved. Nonetheless union mergers also require affirmative votes of the memberships involved. Questions in interviews about the proposed merger elicited a range of responses. Some supported merger as a general step towards trade union unity, one informant even adopting an Industrial Workers of the World-type position, saying that "the fewer unions the better". Some saw the removal of union divisions between blue-collar and white-collar workers as desirable and progressive, while some felt their members had little in common with members of COHSE and NUPE and that an enlarged union would have many internal conflicts of interest. Others were concerned about union democracy in a merged union, emphasising their concern that lay officers should keep control over negotiations and not have full-time officials coming in and doing the negotiating for them. They felt this was an important tradition of NALGO not possessed by COHSE and NUPE which should be maintained. As one informant put it:-

"What bothers me is the potential merger with NUPE and COHSE which are predominantly full-time officer dominated unions and that's something I feel very strongly against."

In assessing these mixed responses to the prospect of union merger it should be remarked that they did not fall into any particular left/right cleavage or relate noticeably to any particular divisions of department, occupation or gender. Indeed the implications for women's representation in the new union were not mentioned by interviewees, although it later appeared that the new merged union is likely to have a majority of women on the National Executive, with women likely to hold 44 out of the 67 seats (Coote 1992).

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has situated the research in relation to relevant academic studies, in the context of developments in employment and the union movement in Sheffield, and in relation to developments in the trade union movement. Some of the important issues that have been highlighted in this chapter are:-

(a) how to study women's union participation and representation

(b) how far have unions changed on equal rights issues in terms of both policies and structures

(c) how far are unions operating in a changing context on equal rights in employment and society

(d) what are the sources of continuing union activism, and how do they relate to occupational divisions in terms of grade and department and to gender divisions.

The focus of the thesis on union activism in relation to gender, occupation and department is based upon a recognition of the overlapping nature of these variables. While they will be discussed to some degree separately in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7, their interaction will be indicated where possible. Chapter 3 will discuss the research methods used in the study and issues of feminist methodology before proceeding to the main discussion of the research findings which is contained in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the design of the research study; the reasons for the choice of research area; the process of negotiating access for research; and the questionnaire, interview and records stages of the research. (A short summary of the research process is contained in Appendix I.) It then concludes with an assessment of the strengths and limitations of the methods employed. Questions about the use of feminist research methods are addressed in section 3.2 and at other relevant points in the chapter. These include a reappraisal of the relationship between the researcher and the object of research, and the implications of the adoption of different perspectives and priorities for investigation, reflecting the general impact of feminism on the social sciences.

3.2 Design of the Research

3.2.a Introduction to Design of the Research

The research consisted mainly of a mixture of questionnaire and interview methods, which were selected to provide both breadth and depth of coverage. The questionnaire surveyed the total population of shop

stewards in the Sheffield NALGO Local Government Branch, and the branch records of annual lists of shop stewards from 1983 to 1989. The semi-structured interviews took place with a sample of shop stewards and branch officers selected from those who had completed the initial questionnaire survey and from other branch office-holders. Interviewees were selected to provide a balance in terms of gender and to cover various levels of union office-holding and different departments, in order to provide information on a range of experiences and personal circumstances.

3.2.b Designing the Questionnaire Survey

The questionnaire (see Appendix II) was designed in five sections: section A, the longest section, asked about involvement in NALGO, covering areas such as length of service as a shop steward, number of constituents, involvement in Branch Executive and departmental shop stewards' committee, experience of industrial action, feelings about being a shop steward and views of NALGO as a union and what its negotiating priorities should be; section B enquired about employment record, views of Sheffield City Council as an employer and attitudes to work; section C covered questions about life outside work, including influence of relatives and friends who were union activists on union involvement, membership and office-holding in voluntary organisations and political parties; section D addressed views and opinions about areas such as the importance of local government, voting behaviour and attitudes towards gender roles; section

E sought biographical information, including age, sex, marital status, responsibility for children and other dependent relatives, and educational and work experience.

Attitudinal questions on views of work and gender roles used Likert scales. The questionnaire used both forced-choice answers and spaces for write-in comments to provide a more precise summary of the informant's views. It was designed to proceed gradually to the more sensitive personal areas, since questions about voting behaviour or aspects of personal life at the start might discourage informants from completing the questionnaire. It was hoped that by the end of the questionnaire the relevance of such information would be clear to the informants.

This stage of the research provided much valuable information about patterns of union office-holding, the operation of union facility agreements and rates of shop steward turnover, which could be analysed along with data from the branch annual lists of shop stewards. It also collected responses to attitudinal questions on views of trade unions and of employment and gender roles, which gave a picture of the views and attitudes of local union office-holders.

3.2.c Feminist Research Methods

Some feminist writers on research methods (Stanley and Wise 1983) have argued that surveys are both inherently positivist and maybe hence anti-

feminist. The view that positivist research methods are inherently anti-feminist, which I do not share, is one that is effectively challenged by Martin and Roberts (1984) and by Hacker (1989). Martin and Roberts write:-

"We rejected the view held by some feminist researchers, that survey techniques are inherently anti-women and should not be used to examine issues related to women. Firstly the argument that survey researchers' categories reflect dominant assumptions and modes of thought and so fail to reflect the social reality of the world of the researched, and the meaning that their actions could have for the actors could apply to any non-dominant group and is not specific to women. Taken to its logical conclusion it would mean that virtually no social inquiry occurred. Secondly in order to make generalizable statements about all women, essential if we are to discuss the position of women as such, we needed to have a statistically valid representative sample of our research population; survey methodology is the only research tool for dealing with large numbers of research subjects." (pp 6-7).

The argument of Martin and Roberts justifies the use of survey techniques for studying large populations, often thereby providing a framework for smaller scale qualitative studies. They are correct in arguing that the imposition of dominant categories of thought on research subjects is a danger when studying any non-dominant group in society. Questionnaires and interviews, however, can be designed in a way which avoids imposing the researcher's categories on people's experiences throughout, for instance by provision of space for write-in comments.

Marsh (1982) discusses the argument that survey methods are inevitably positivist and points out that survey techniques can also be used, for instance in community studies, to enable a group to become conscious of itself and its possibilities for collective action. Hacker's use of survey techniques is an example of this process. In the context of the present

research the use of a survey technique as the first stage of data-gathering seems to me defensible, if exaggerated claims are not made either about the suitability of survey techniques to offer causal explanation or about the representativeness of the sample.

Harding (1987) in discussing the question of whether there is a feminist method argues that feminist researchers use the same methods of enquiry as other researchers, namely interviews and questionnaires, observation and study of records, but produce feminist research because they have become sensitised to observing different phenomena. This is the perspective on feminist research methods adopted in this thesis. These arguments suggest that there is nothing inherently feminist or non-feminist about the selection of particular research methods. The feminist perspective appears rather in the problems selected for investigation and the formulation of research questions. If feminist researchers acknowledge that their feminism affects the choice of research area, they then have to address the issues of engagement and objectivity of their research.

Recent writings on feminist research methodology (Smith 1988, Cook and Fonow 1990, Hacker, edited by Smith and Turner 1990) have argued the case for an engaged sociology, a sociology for women, which sees it purpose as being not only to understand women's situation but to contribute towards changing it. Some of these arguments could also be applied to the study of trade unions in general. Smith argues that a sociology for women involves keeping women as subjects not objects of research, so that the

researcher keeps in mind the women's perspective, while recognising that as a sociologist she is an outsider and part of an academic culture, which is separated from everyday existence. Smith refers to a 'fault line' in women sociologists' existence as women and their existence as sociologists.

Cook and Fonow (1990) advocate five principles of feminist methodology. These are:-

- an acknowledgement of the pervasive influence of gender;
- a focus on consciousness-raising;
- a rejection of the subject-object separation, in that feminists should not objectify other women;
- an examination of the ethical concerns of the research;
- an emphasis on empowerment and transformation.

They argue that research which simply documents women's oppression is not feminist research, because it does not take account of women's fighting back against oppression and does not point the way to any solutions. They are not necessarily recommending here that all feminist research should be action research or should produce specific policy proposals, but are concerned with the development of an analysis which indicates possibilities of change in women's position. It could be added that a one-sided focus on oppression which ignores resistance also produces a one-side and inadequate sociological account. Their arguments bring together, in a useful summary, approaches to research which feminist scholars have been developing since the rise of second-wave feminism.

This thesis on gender and unions fits within a framework of feminist research which seeks both to understand women's position in unions, including their under-representation in union office-holding, to recognise the strengths of women's union activism and the advances unions have made in tackling issues of gender inequality and to indicate ways of improving women's level of representation within unions and unions' responsiveness to the concerns of working women.

The adoption of an 'engaged' stance by feminist researchers raises obvious issues of the academic standing of their work. Some feminist writers (Oakley 1981, Harding 1987, Nielson 1990) have addressed this issue, arguing that a feminist perspective can inform research without invalidating its claims to scientific status. The definition of science may need re-examination, which may indeed produce better research. Oakley (1981) demonstrates in her discussion of interviewing women about motherhood that a totally neutral style of interviewing would have been useless in getting meaningful answers to her questions. By abandoning the style of interviewing recommended in some textbooks and sharing experiences with interviewees Oakley was able to conduct important research about the transition to motherhood. My own experience of interviewing union activists for this research was that a totally objective style was not appropriate as a research technique (see section 3.6).

Harding (1987) argues that feminist research by abandoning a phoney objectivism and placing the researcher in the same framework as the

subject matter actually manages to produce a more critical and precise analysis. She also rejects a defence of feminist research on relativist grounds, the view that feminism is just another perspective, because this allows androcentric views to remain unchallenged. Nielson (1990) discusses the status of feminist research in the context of theories of science and argues that feminist research produced a paradigm shift within sociology. She examines the arguments of standpoint epistemology, the claim that oppressed groups can produce a more complete view of the world because they know both the official view of reality and the view from their subordinate position. Nielson recognises the case for this argument up to a point, while observing correctly that the danger of standpoint epistemology is that it can lead to the assumption that the greater the degree of oppression, the higher the level of knowledge and this is not necessarily the case. The contributions of Harding and Nielson to the debate about the scientific status of feminist research are important in reformulating the problem of scientific status and objectivity by locating the researcher partially within the field of investigation rather than completely outside it. The research in this thesis on NALGO shop stewards was accomplished by utilising knowledge acquired both from the study of sociological perspectives and from personal experience as a union activist.

3.2.d Designing the Interview Survey

The qualitative part of the research was based upon semi-structured interviews conducted with shop stewards, ex-shop stewards and branch officers. The interviews were recorded on audiotape. The interview schedule (see Appendix III) was designed to cover questions about the department, about the relation between the interviewee's job and union work, and about gender roles. Reasons for continuing as a shop steward or union officer or ceasing to hold union office were also explored. Areas which were identified from the questionnaire stage as particularly important to follow up were the working of the departmental shop stewards' committees and the operation of union facilities agreements.

Interviews usually started with a question about how the departmental shop stewards' committee worked in the interviewee's department, since this was generally perceived as a straightforward and non-threatening question. They concluded with giving the interviewee the opportunity to add anything important about the role of the shop steward which the interviewer had omitted to ask. This produced some interesting observations, sometimes to the effect that being a shop steward was a thankless task. Most shop stewards seemed to welcome the chance to talk at some length about their union work, reflecting perhaps the fact that union representatives generally feel their work is not properly appreciated. I was known to some of the interviewees as a union activist myself and this may have eased my access to informants. Therefore I did not adopt a totally impartial style of interviewing, but let general

sympathy for trade unionism be apparent, while avoiding any judgemental inferences about appropriate union policies or levels of union activism.

The inclusion of a number of ex-shop stewards at this stage of the project was important in following up reasons for ceasing to hold union office. The interviews with the branch officers were valuable in providing an overall view of the branch and contributed particularly to the analysis of departmental variations in the operation of the shop steward system. They also allowed for the study of a more intensive level of union activism than that associated with being a shop steward.

This is the level of union activism referred to by Batstone et al. (1979) as the 'quasi-elite' and it is the level which leads on to regional and national union office-holding. This level is important in terms of trade union policies of attempting to develop more women as union leaders. Most branch officers had previously been shop stewards and some shop stewards were ex-branch officers, and so in interviews both these groups were able to supply information and views based not only on their current union office, but also their past office or offices.

3.2.e Analysis of the Branch Records of Shop Stewards

Analysis of the branch annual lists of shop stewards provided information about patterns of union office-holding by department and gender. A few problems were encountered in interpreting this information from year to

year since some departments were re-organised and the name changed. Some shop stewards also moved from one department to another as a result either of departmental re-organisation or career change. Another difficulty was to allow for the possibility of some female shop stewards changing their name in relation to changes in marital status. Finally data on length of office-holding from these lists has to be treated with some caution since elections for shop stewards to fill vacant constituencies can take place throughout the year in addition to the annual elections. This material has been used in the thesis particularly for analysis of rates of shop steward turnover and will be discussed in Chapters 4 (section 3f), 5 (section 4e) and 7 (section 4e).

3.3 Choice of Research Area

The Sheffield NALGO Local Government Branch was chosen for the research project because it offered the opportunity to study a sizeable population of about 200 union office-holders of both sexes at a range of levels in the occupational hierarchy and in a variety of different departments. It thus offered an ideal opportunity for investigating the influence of occupation, gender and department on union office-holding. As the material discussed in Chapter 2 regarding the history and environment of the branch shows, it also provided substantial material for sociological analysis, situated as it was in a Labour-controlled city, where the influence of unions based in heavy industry, such as engineering and steel, had played an important role in the history of the local labour

movement. The branch had also been recently involved in major local and national disputes as well as facing many industrial and political problems relating to local government finance and the issues of rate-capping and the poll tax.

There were two existing research studies which provided important co-ordinates for the research. The study by Nicholson, Ursell and Blyton (1981) of the Sheffield NALGO Local Government Branch provided much valuable material about the recent history of the branch, including the introduction of the shop steward system, and explored at length the relation between grade and union office-holding. It identified the under-representation of women in low-grade jobs in union office-holding, but did not explore fully the dimensions of gender inequality. The study by Stone (1984) of women's position in Council employment not only documented the existing gender inequalities, but revealed their departmental distribution, with more higher grade posts being located in the predominantly male departments. These two studies will be referred to in subsequent chapters.

3.4 Negotiating Access

As with many research projects in industrial sociology the negotiation of access was lengthy and difficult. Negotiations started in the Summer of 1985 with a conversation with the Branch Secretary following a monthly delegate meeting of Sheffield Trades Council and subsequent

correspondence to put the research request on an official footing. Negotiations encountered various problems, including the changeover of NALGO personnel (both the branch organiser and the elected officers), which led to the need to re-explain the research project and build up support for it again. NALGO officers and the Branch Executive generally had concerns over confidentiality, publication of research findings and the general purposes of the reseach. No doubt some of these reservations arise from general trade union suspicions of academic research and concerns about adverse publicity. These reservations may have also reflected the difficulties of carrying out industrial relations research in the political climate of the mid to late-eighties in which trade unions felt on the defensive, faced with a hostile Conservative government, attacks on public sector trade unionism and on the principle of national pay bargaining, laws restricting the activities of trade unions and lack of sympathy of the employers (a Labour Council) to white collar workers.

These issues raise the question of the status of the researcher as neutral academic or partisan trade unionist. I was known to at least some members of the NALGO branch as a trade union and Labour Party activist in the city. One of the leading NALGO shop stewards in Family & Community Services, who was Branch Secretary at the time I started to negotiate access for the research project, was a member of the same Labour Party branch as myself. Also, at the time of setting up the research project I was a delegate to Sheffield Trades Council and so knew several of the leading NALGO officers via the Trades Council (eg the NALGO Executive Officer who was Vice-chair of the Trades Council). I

think some personal credibility as a trade unionist, and so somebody likely to write up a sympathetic account of the branch, was important in gaining access and getting some key informants to talk openly. The Education Officer at one stage informed me that a request from some academics at Manchester University to conduct research on the branch had been turned down. So while the branch was fairly used to being researched, given the previous work of Nicholson, Ursell and Blyton (1981), gaining access was by no means a formality.

3.5 The Questionnaire Stage

The time scale of research arrangements was slow. It took around two years from obtaining formal agreement to the research project to the point of the distribution of the questionnaire survey to shop stewards in July 1987. This arose because the text of the questionnaire had to be approved by the Branch Executive. The delays arose partly as a result of the monthly cycle of NALGO committee meetings, so that any queries meant matters were put back to the next meeting in a month's time. For instance the Economic and General Purposes Sub-committee referred some queries about the questionnaire back to the Branch Executive in April 1987, the next (May) meeting of the Executive became inquorate before the item was reached and the June meeting of the Executive was inquorate, as a result of a Special General Meeting the previous evening. Usually items not reached were referred to the Economic and General Purposes Sub-committee for action, but this was constitutionally impossible with an

item which the Sub-committee had itself referred back to the Executive. The Branch Executive finally approved the questionnaire at its meeting of 2nd July 1987. Also NALGO officers were pre-occupied in Spring 1987 with the City Council's budget crisis, so extra sensitivity was needed in this period about making demands on people's time.

The design of the questionnaire encountered the usual difficulties in relation to length versus comprehensiveness and forced choice versus open answers. The questionnaire covered some sensitive areas, e.g. political party membership and voting behaviour, which some informants chose not to answer. There was concern on the part of the branch about questions concerning the operation of union facility agreements and the amount of time spent on union work. Some fears were expressed that this information, if broadcast insensitively, might be used by the Council against the union, claiming that NALGO shop stewards were spending too much time on union work at public expense. Confidentiality guarantees were given regarding non-identifiability of individual shop stewards and an agreement was reached that no research findings would be published without the consent of the NALGO branch.

A pilot stage of the questionnaire was conducted among ex-shop stewards in the branch, whose names were supplied by the Education Officer. The results were generally satisfactory. Six questionnaires, out of seven sent out, were returned, i.e. an acceptable response rate. The questions appeared to be understood and to elicit meaningful answers. The main problem identified was that the questionnaire did not fit into the pre-

paid reply envelope, so the final version of the questionnaire was thus slightly photo-reduced and given a less rigid cover.

Distribution of the questionnaire occurred in July 1987 via the branch's regular shop stewards mailing, with a covering letter and pre-paid reply envelope. 200 copies of the questionnaire were sent out, but there were difficulties in ascertaining the exact number of shop stewards in the branch. I was told that 200 was the figure usually employed for shop stewards' mailings, but this figure probably approximated to the number of shop steward constituencies in the branch, rather than the number of incumbent shop stewards. 41 questionnaires were received within the initial one month period after the questionnaires were sent out and 64 completed questionnaires were received in total, giving an estimated response rate of 32%, although since some stewards' constituencies are usually vacant the real percentage may be higher.

Computer analysis of the data was conducted using SPSSX (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) in 1987. Crosstabulations were carried out by sex, grade and department. This analysis suggested that sex and department were more significant variables than grade, although it is important to bear in mind the interrelationship of the three. This computer analysis was significant in helping to formulate questions for use in the semi-structured interview schedule, particularly in highlighting the significance of union facility time.

Table 1: Departmental Distribution of Respondents to Questionnaire

F&CS (Family and Community Services)	11	(17.2%)	
Housing	7	(10.9%)	
Polytechnic	4	(6.3%)	
Library	2	(3.1%)	
Education	17	(26.6%)	
Employment	1	(1.6%)	
Treasury	6	(9.4%)	
Police	1	(1.6%)	
Environmental Health	2	(3.1%)	
Poly Students Union	1	(1.5%)	
Land & Planning	3	(4.7%)	
Design & Building	4	(6.3%)	
Works	1	(1.6%)	
South Yorks Probation	1	(1.6%)	
Cleansing	1	(1.6%)	
Recreation	1	(1.6%)	
Missing	1	(1.6%)	
Total	64	(100%)	(N = 64)

This departmental distribution can be further classified by examining the gender balance of the staff in the departments. In the following discussion I am using the classification used by Stone (1984), based on

the relative numbers of male and female staff in departments, but not at their seniority. Some departments had a majority of male staff and are defined as 'male-dominated', some had roughly equal proportions of male and female staff and can be defined as 'balanced' and some had a majority of female staff and can be defined as 'female-dominated'. It is important to emphasise that these classifications only refer to the numbers of men and women working in the department and not to the relative seniority of the male and female staff.

Table 2; Analysis of Shop Stewards Answering the Questinnaire by Gender Proportions in Departments

'Male-dominated' departments

(Works, Planning, Environmental Health, Recreation, Cleansing, Design)

12 18.8%

'Female-dominated' departments

(F&CS, Education, Libraries, Polytechnic)

34 53.1%

'Balanced departments'

(Housing, Treasury, Employment)

14 21.8%

Three external departments

(Polytechnic Students' Union, South Yorkshire Probation, Police)

3 4.7%

Thus a slight majority of the sample worked in predominantly female departments, with 18.8% working in predominantly male departments and 21.8% working in gender balanced departments. These figures only apply to relative numbers of men and women in departments not to seniority of posts, although a greater proportion of senior posts existed in departments where there were more men, i.e. the structure of opportunities was not the same for the two sexes (Stone 1984).

Table 3: Grade of Post of Informants answering the Questionnaire

Nursery Nurse 1	2	(3.1%)
Scale 1	3	(4.7%)
Scale 2	9	(14.1%)
Scale 3	5	(7.8%)
Scale 4	5	(7.8%)
Scale 5	9	(14.1%)
Scale 6	10	(15.6%)
Senior Officer	8	(12.5%)
Principal Officer	3	(4.7%)
Social Worker 3	8	(12.5%)
Social Worker 6	1	(1.6%)
Missing	1	(1.6%)
Total	64	(100%)

(N = 64)

Table 4: Distribution of Questionnaire Responses by Sex

Male	42	(65.6%)	
Female	22	(34.4%)	
Total	64	(100%)	(N = 64)

3.6 The Interview Stage

Interviews were recorded on audiotape in Autumn 1989 and Spring 1990. Interviews lasted in length between half an hour and two hours and were conducted either in the workplace or in the NALGO branch office. The interviewees were selected to cover a range of shop stewards by occupation, gender, department and length of union office-holding. Also a few ex-shop stewards were interviewed, which allowed the opportunity to explore reasons for shop steward turnover. At least one ex-shop steward had maintained a high level of union activity, on the branch publicity committee, while ceasing to hold a shop steward post, demonstrating the need for care in relating union activism and union office-holding. The interviews, which were transcribe dby mid-April 1990, revealed considerable departmental differences.

Table 5: Details of Interviewees

Post	Sex	Department	Grade
Education Officer	Female	F&CS	SW3
Branch Organiser	Male	NALGO employee	
Equal Opportunities Officer (ex Shop Stewards Organiser)	Female	Land and Planning	PO1
Shop Steward	Male	Polytechnic	Scale 6
Ex-shop Steward	Female	Polytechnic	Scale 3
Shop Steward (ex Branch Secretary)	Male	F&CS	SW3
Chief Shop Steward (ex Shop Stewards Organiser)	Male	Polytechnic	SO1/2
Ex-shop Steward	Male	F&CS	SW3
Ex-shop Steward	Female	F&CS	SW3
Ex-shop Steward	Female	F&CS	SW3
Service Conditions Officer	Male	Education	Scale 6
Executive Officer	Male	Employment	SO1/2
Chief Shop Steward	Male	F&CS	Scale 6
Welfare Officer (ex Chief Shop Steward)	Female	Education	Scale 4
International Relations and Anti-Racism Officer	Male	Central Policy Unit	SO1/2
Publicity Officer	Female	Education	NN1/2
Ex-shop Steward	Female	Education	NN1/2
Branch Organiser	Female	NALGO employee	
Shop Steward	Female	Housing	Scale 4

Table 5: Details of Interviewees

Post	Sex	Department	Grade
Ex-shop Steward	Female	Treasury	Scale 2
Ex-shop Steward	Male	Employment	Scale 6
Shop Steward (ex Branch President)	Male	Treasury	PO1
Shop Steward (ex Branch President and ex Equal Opportunities Officer)	Female	Personnel	Scale 6
Shop Steward	Male	Land and Planning	SO2

Table 6: Distribution of Interviewees by Sex

Female	12	(50%)	
Male	12	(50%)	
Total	24	(100%)	(N = 24)

Table 7: Distribution of Interviewees by Union Office

Branch Officer	7	
Shop Steward	8	
Ex-shop Steward	7	
NALGO Organiser	2	
Total	24	(N = 24)

Table 8: Distribution of Interviewees by Department

Central Policy Unit	1	
Education	4	
Employment	2	
F&CS	6	
Housing	1	
Land and Planning	2	
Personnel	1	
Polytechnic	3	
Treasury	2	
NALGO Staff	2	
Total	24	(N = 24)

Table 9: Distribution of Interviewees by Grade

NN1/2 (Nursery Nurse 1/2)	2
Scale 2	2
Scale 3	1
Scale 4	2
Scale 6	5
SO1/2 (Senior Officer 1/2)	4
PO1 (Principal Officer 1)	2
RSW2/3 (Residential Social Worker 2/3)	1
SW3 (Social Worker 3)	3
Total	22
(plus two NALGO organisers)	(N = 24)

3.7 Strengths and Limitations of the Data

The research findings reported in the next four chapters are based on a field study of Sheffield NALGO Local Government Branch, which was a large NALGO branch in a northern industrial city. The branch was sufficiently large and heterogeneous in membership to allow for some comparisons of union activists by gender, department and occupational level, but it was a study of the union in one city. As with all field studies it can be argued that a study of a larger population might generate results of greater statistical reliability. What this research does achieve, however, is a detailed exploration of the inter-relationship of gender, occupation and department and their influence on union activism. Within NALGO the Sheffield Local Government Branch can be viewed as one of the better-organised 'pace-setter' branches. It is not claimed that all the characteristics of this branch, such as the presence of an International Relations Sub-Committee, would be found in all NALGO branches. Nonetheless it may be important as a branch which indicates the future direction NALGO is likely to take as a union, as can be seen from the way

the shop steward system was pioneered in this branch in 1974 and subsequently adopted nationally by NALGO.

The use of the questionnaire survey was valuable in identifying the issue of union facility time as an important one to follow up in interviews when exploring occupational and gender differences in union office-holding. Besides following up issues from the questionnaire, the interviews provided the opportunity to explore departmental variations in levels and forms of union organisation, which was a topic which it had not been really possible to explore in the questionnaire. They also allowed enquiry about developments subsequent to the questionnaire survey, such as the 1989 national strike and the impending merger with COHSE (Confederation of Health Service Employees) and NUPE (National Union of Public Employees). Some of the more subtle gender differences in union office-holding and the personal feelings of union representatives about their union work were also topics more appropriately investigated by interview than by questionnaire.

The study of the annual lists of shop stewards produced some fairly crude statistical data about patterns of union office-holding and rates of shop steward turnover. This indicated an absence of significant gender difference in length of service as a shop steward, but some interesting departmental variations in turnover rates. It also showed that a majority of stewards served for a fairly short period, around two years, and that it was only a minority of stewards who served for several years.

The area of gender and unions, with the exception of a number of notable historical studies (Lewenhak 1977, Soldon 1978, Boston 1987) is still under-researched. This study contributes to filling this gap in the academic literature and it attempts to explore the impact of gender roles on men's as well as women's union activism. It also takes a step forward in the study of women's union involvement from the work of Wertheimer and Nelson (1975) by trying to avoid researching the topic from a starting point which focuses one-sidedly on barriers to women's union participation or from an assumption that it is women's lower rates of union participation which are the problem for explanation. This fits in with the approach to feminist methodology discussed earlier (Cook and Fonow 1990) in section 3.2, which argues that a one-sided emphasis on oppression and under-achievement continually portrays women as victims and fails to recognise struggles against discrimination or produce any useful strategies for improving women's situation.

3.8 Conclusion

The main arguments concerning the research problem, regarding the inter-relationship of gender, occupational and departmental influences on union activism, have been stated in the introduction to the thesis. This argument was elaborated in the first part of Chapter 2, Background to the Research, by a discussion of the relevant academic studies and theories. Having attempted to situate the research project in theoretical terms, the remainder of Chapter 2 examined the double contexts of Sheffield and

developments within the trade union movement. This background material was important for understanding the context of the study and the various issues discussed particularly in the interview material. In Chapter 3, Research Methods, I have reported on the process of doing the research and discussed it in relation to relevant literature on research methods. The main research findings are reported in the next four chapters.

CHAPTER 4 SHOP STEWARD ACTIVISM AND OCCUPATION

4.1 Introduction

One approach to the investigation of work-related barriers to and motivators for union activism is to look at occupational divisions associated with grade. Much of the literature on union participation, as discussed in Chapter 2, explores reasons for union participation in terms of work-related factors, so this approach is situated in a mainstream intellectual tradition in industrial sociology. This chapter first examines the occupational structure in local government in order to examine the context for the research findings discussed in the second part of this chapter. Material in this section is organised under the following headings:-

a) patterns of occupational segregation;

b) departmental variations in occupational structure and job grades;

c) the grading system in local government;

d) the history of equal pay in local government;

e) regrading disputes;

f) the issues of low pay and grading.

The second part of this chapter examines various aspects of the relationship between occupation and union activism drawing on data from the questionnaire and interview surveys. This material is organised under the following headings:-

a) occupation and distribution of shop stewards;

b) occupation and attitudes to being a shop steward;

c) occupation and bargaining priorities;

d) occupation and experiences of industrial action;

e) occupation and operation of union facility agreements;

f) occupation and shop steward turnover;

g) occupation and women's representation within NALGO.

Two main conclusions stand out from both the questionnaire and interview research: the **obstacles** to union office-holding associated with inflexibility of work for lower-grade, chiefly female, staff (and it is noticeable that inflexibility appeared more of a problem than the sheer volume of work) and the **motivators** for union activism in terms of the work content of some departments, especially Family and Community Services and Housing, which seemed to encourage staff to develop their broader political and social awareness. This latter factor will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 which examines the departmental variable.

4.2 The Occupational Structure in Local Government

4.2.a Patterns of Occupational Segregation

The general issue of occupational segregation by sex has been discussed in Chapter 2.2.c. The literature referred to in Chapter 2.2.c indicates the extent of occupational segregation by sex, its

persistence over time and the process of sex-typing of jobs, as new areas of employment develop. Local government is a field of employment which encompasses a wide variety of occupations. Many jobs on the white-collar side are traditional female occupations, e.g. secretarial and typing jobs, while others are traditional areas of male employment, e.g. surveying and accountancy. The 1984 Positive Action Report (Stone 1984) demonstrates in its statistical profiles the consequences of this occupational segregation for men's and women's earnings. This found that men were more evenly distributed across the salary ranges, with their lowest representation on scale 1-2, the lowest pay scale, whereas women tended to be concentrated on the lowest salary scales, with 56% of female employees on scales 1-2. At the other end of the salary scales at Principal Officer level and above were found 3% of female white-collar employees and 25% of male white-collar employees. The report notes:-

"The proportion of men in each range **increases** steadily as the earnings level increases, and the proportion of women in each range **decreases** steadily as the earnings level increases."
(Stone 1984 Statistical Profiles page 3)

One of the case studies in the Positive Action Report examines the situation of women in the data preparation section of the Treasury Department, an exclusively female area of employment. An analysis of the staffing process revealed that only women were recruited to the data preparation jobs, which had few opportunities for career progression. Of a core workforce in the City Treasury, who were recruited as office juniors, some, chiefly men, went on to gain

higher qualifications and promotion, while others, mainly women, tended to stay in clerical jobs at grade 5 or below, which required no or lower level qualifications. The majority of professional accountants and computer specialists were men, reflecting the national labour force in such occupations. This analysis highlights the importance of formal qualifications in the processes of recruitment and promotion. Women lost out in job terms both because they were recruited with lower qualifications, reflecting inequalities in the formal educational system, and because they were not given sufficient career counselling to take appropriate qualifications when in employment. While some women did have access to day-release they tended to take qualifications which reinforced their performance in their existing jobs rather than ones which would have allowed them to switch to jobs with more career opportunities. The processes of inequality in occupation identified here are partly similar to those discussed by Crompton and Jones (1984) in "Cohall", where local authority employment patterns tended to reproduce inequalities arising from education and training prior to entering employment. This can, of course, make inequalities appear 'fair' and thus harder to challenge. Thus at the level of organisational culture there is a 'fit' between the bureaucratic grading system and the use of formal qualifications for appointment and promotion.

4.2.b Departmental Variations in Occupational Structure and Job Grades

The Positive Action Report (Stone 1984) indicates not only the inequalities in grading between men and women in local government, but also the distribution of these inequalities by department. While women were concentrated on the lower salary ranges in all departments, there were some noticeable variations. In the predominantly female department of Education (Administration) 80% of women were on the lowest two grades, grades 1 and 2, in Libraries 79% of women were on grades 1 and 2, but in F&CS only 17% of women were on these grades. Some departments (F&CS and Employment) did have a higher percentage of women on the higher grades and these may have acted as role models for other women. The inequalities in men's and women's grading need to be explained in terms of the fact that the predominantly male departments tended to have more higher graded posts, so that men worked in departments where promotion opportunities were greater. For instance one of the shop stewards in Land and Planning explained the relatively small numbers of low-paid workers in his department in terms of the occupational structure:-

"I think there are less [low-paid workers] than most, being a professional department, estate surveyors, building surveyors, transportation people, there's a high number of people working in professional jobs and that's where the bulk of the department's work is done. The admin staff are in a support role, whereas in other departments a lot of the basic work is actually done by admin staff because that is the nature of the work."
(Shop Steward in Land and Planning)

In the more gender-balanced department of the City Treasury the occupational structure was still one which gave men substantial

promotion opportunities. One of the senior shop stewards in this department described it as follows:-

"In a normal department there's a pyramid structure where you have a lot of people on clerical grades and it peaks at Principal Officer level. Our department's more like an egg-timer where there's a large number of people on clerical grades, a large number of people on Principal Officer grades and relatively few in the middle."
(Shop Steward in Treasury)

These variations in men's and women's occupational opportunities need to be borne in mind in subsequent discussions of the relation between occupational position and opportunities for union activism.

4.2.c The Grading System in Local Government

Employment in local government is dominated by the grading system. The role of NALGO in establishing national pay grades for local government officers is explained by Spoor (1967). He argues in his history of NALGO that many reforms in local government were initiated by the employees not the councillors. A 1918 NALGO conference motion called for a national salary scale for local government officers and this was achieved in 1920 with the establishment of a Whitley Council for local government, but not all local authorities paid according to the national scale. Indeed in 1940 only 553 of the 1530 local authorities belonged to provincial Whitley Councils. In October 1943 a National Council was established with a national joint negotiating committee and in 1944 national salary scales were finally

achieved, but without equal pay for women. The long campaign by NALGO for the establishment of national pay scales may have developed a union culture which was strongly committed to the defence of national bargaining and contributed to the readiness of NALGO members to defend it in the national dispute of 1989, when the employers proposed to remove many national agreements.

4.2.d History of Equal Pay in Local Government

The 1932 Conference of NALGO debated the issue of equal pay, partly because some local authorities were substituting cheaper female workers for male workers. The 1936 Conference voted in favour of equal pay, but also voted to oppose the employment of married women in local government. In 1944 NALGO conducted a survey of its women members and found that 35,000 NALGO members were female (27%) out of a total membership of 130,000 (Spoor 1967). 75% of the women members were employed in clerical work. In terms of equal pay the survey found that 6% of women members were doing the same work as men and were receiving equal pay, 40% were doing the same work as men and were receiving lower pay (on average around 70% of the male rate) and 54% of women members were doing work not normally done by men, so that no comparison of pay in terms of the rate for the job could be made.

This 1944 survey also found that 98% of women members worked because they needed to support themselves, and 48% were living with and

partially supporting their parents. 60% of women local government officers were aged over thirty. Given the presence between the war years of a marriage bar in local government it is, of course, not surprising that so many female local government officers were self-supporting. A 1945 Royal Commission supported the introduction of equal pay into local government and the civil service but it took several years more campaigning to achieve it. In 1945 the Whitley Council incorporated equal pay into national APT (Administrative, Professional and Technical) pay rates. In 1952 the London County Council granted equal pay to all its female local government officers and equal pay was achieved nationally in local government in 1955 (Spoor 1967).

Thus NALGO was one of the unions which managed to achieve equal pay for its women members well in advance of the coming into force of the 1970 Equal Pay Act at the end of 1975. Equal pay was achieved in the context of a bureaucratic grading system, which may well be less sex discriminatory than performance-related pay or other payment systems found in the private sector, but which can place pay inequalities on a seemingly objective basis. Thus, given the formal presence of equal pay, equal pay issues for women in local government have tended to take the form of disputes over grading, in which issues of equal pay for women and better pay for low-paid workers are intertwined.

4.2.e Regrading Disputes

Recently employers in local government have brought in performance related pay for some senior officers in a move away from a bureaucratic grading system. In the Sheffield NALGO Local Government Branch NALGO had not been involved directly with the negotiation of performance-related pay, which had been undertaken by a smaller union representing senior officers. The bureaucratic character of the grading system can be seen in the fact that interviewees reported that considerable time, sometimes periods of two years or more, had been spent on various regrading cases. Thus it could be argued that the bureaucratic structure of the payment system generated much work for local union officers. Regrading claims were seen as a way of improving the situation of the lower paid workers, and so the amount of time spent on them corresponded with the high ranking given by shop stewards to "Pay rises for the lower paid" in their priorities for collective bargaining.

One of the best known regrading cases the Sheffield NALGO Local Government branch had taken up was regrading for the nursery nurses. This had taken three years of campaigning between 1985 and 1988, meetings in the House of Commons and industrial action. One of the leaders of this campaign described it as follows:-

"Well I'd been a nursery nurse for fifteen years. I'd worked for the Education Authority for a long time, and in 1985 a group of us got together to try and do something about our salaries. At that time we were paid on under £5000 a year, which sounds low now, but even then

it was very, very low. We were on low pay supplements, so we were under the low pay threshold. We decided that we would get together to try and get in a regrading claim for nursery nurses and child care assistants (CCAs) in Sheffield. We set up a working party consisting of nursery nurses and CCAs and we had one of the branch service conditions officers to help us. We went through the local grievance procedure, collective dispute and in the end we got to the stage where the Council was saying yes, we should be paid more money, but "We haven't got any money to pay you". And that was when we started the campaign and involved local groups, parents' groups. We got involved with governors, the governing bodies of schools and head-teachers and teaching unions, other unions who work in schools, such as NUT and the manual and craft unions. It was a long time, over a year, but in the end we did negotiate a settlement. We organised strike action, we were on strike for quite a while, we took selective strike action, and we'd just balloted for indefinite all-out strike action, when we actually got a settlement with the Council."
(Branch Publicity Officer, former nursery nurse shop steward)

This statement shows the lengthy nature of procedures in industrial relations in local government and also the political difficulties of negotiating with a Labour Council, which may concede the justice of workers' demands, but also claim inability to pay. The nursery nurses' campaign brought a number of workers into union activism, who had not been highly involved before. It was thus an empowering experience for some of those involved, who had later gone on to hold branch office.

Following the achievement of regrading by the nursery nurses in the Education Department a similar regrading was obtained in a much shorter period of time by the nursery officers in F&CS.

"In fact way back when I was branch secretary, the service conditions officer started doing some work with the nursery nurses and the school clerks and as a consequence of that some three years later, with a very gradual schedule of industrial action, the nursery nurses in the Education Department secured a regrading. ... It probably took

them about three years to get from the point where they decided they wanted regrading to get their regrading. ..... Yet only this year (1989) the nursery officers in F&CS who are on different conditions, who don't get as many holidays and things like that and are on worse conditions than people in Education, with the people in Education, they decided they wanted to actively pursue a regrading claim. Within about four months from them deciding and from them withdrawing good will over certain things they thought were not in the job descriptions, they actually achieved a significant regrading, and they threatened industrial action and achieved it all within the space of four months."
(Shop Steward in F&CS)

This statement typifies the differences in union culture between the departments of Education and F&CS, which will be explored in Chapter 7 of the thesis.

Regrading had also been achieved, albeit with some difficulties in implementation, for forty technicians in Land and Planning.

"There has been one instance where we actually set the agenda, where we wanted the technicians regraded across the whole department, and that took two and a half years of solid work to actually get management to agree to the regrading. We got improvements for, I think it was, forty members of staff, who were amongst the lowest paid and doing more than basic work. People in that position do, in my opinion, work which is above what they're properly qualified or trained to do, so they're thrown in the deep end and they end up with more responsible work than perhaps they should have, and we wanted that to be recognised in this new scheme."
(Shop Steward in Land and Planning)

In the Education Department two of the school meals supervisors were pursuing an equal value case with the support of NALGO. This case shows clearly how issues of regrading were tied in with attempts to revalue areas of work traditionally done by women. One of the union officers involved in this case described it as follows:-

"Yes, it's myself and another school meals supervisor, who work in catering, which is a cinderella service anyway. It's a predominantly

female service, so of course all the wages are depressed in that service, and there are all sorts of ideas floating around about catering, like if you can cook at home for four, then you can cook in a kitchen for four hundred. It's like people don't realise the skills that are needed for those sorts of jobs, and so for supervising, my own position, for supervising forty staff and five establishments, I'm paid a scale 4, whereas a man in this Authority for supervising the same number of staff and doing basically the same job as I'm doing is on SO1/2. And so we decided as a constituency to take out an equal value case, and just two people are fronting that up, but it is a constituency decision, hopefully so we will get everybody regraded. We actually did win a regrading when we threatened to take it up, but they only pushed us up one grade, so we went ahead with the case.

We are at the point where an independent expert has been appointed and has done a job of work, the Local Authority then appointed their independent expert and NALGO's appointed their independent expert and we go back to the tribunal in January (1990).
(NALGO Branch Welfare Officer and School Meals Supervisor, former Chief Shop Steward in Education Department)

This statement clearly links the issues of job grading with sex discrimination in employment. The nursery nurses too felt that their work was under-valued because the vast majority of nursery nurses were female, although one of the nursery nurse shop stewards involved in their regrading campaign was a man, and a male service conditions officer had done much to encourage and assist their regrading campaign. Thus these regrading campaigns indicate responses by the union to the issues of both low pay and gender inequality.

4.2.f The Issue of Low Pay

The issue of low pay and regrading had been addressed in negotiations by a number of branch officers and shop stewards in the Sheffield NALGO Local Government Branch. In some departments a 'clerical

career grade' had been introduced in the mid-eighties. Interviewees described this as follows:-

"Well a lot of our clerks are paid on the clerical 1/2, that is in terms of money, but it's right at the bottom of the payment scale for local government workers, white collar government workers, and the clerical career grade will take them up to scale 3 or 4. So it's a way of actually coming in on a grade and knowing that over a number of years your salary will rise to, it's either scale 3 or 4, instead of being stuck at the bottom for ever and a day, however much responsibility you take on in an office."
(Female ex-shop steward in F&CS)

"I mean while we're still addressing all those issues of low pay we have been successful now in getting every member, except those who are new entrants off scale 1, so in APT&C they're on scale 2/3 which is not massive in terms of the amount of additional money, but if you go to an authority like Rotherham, Barnsley, all those surrounding us, you will find their biggest single group of members are on scale 1, and they're not just on scale 1/2/3, you can progress, they're on scale 1 and on it for life, unless they get a different job."
(Executive Officer)

The approach in the "clerical career grade" strategy went beyond seeking a regrading for a specific group of staff in that it attempted to open up the grading structure to provide opportunities for career progression for all staff. For women workers, especially, in local government therefore it provided prospects for job advancement, rather in the way that the Responding to Change Agreement, which emerged at the end of the new technology dispute, had opened up job prospects for data preparation workers. At the time the research was conducted it was rather too early to determine whether these improvements in women's work situation were likely to lead to increased levels of union activism and union office-holding. Moreover it should be noted that the "clerical career grade" did not necessarily provide opportunities for movement out of clerical work into the types of jobs which made union office-holding easier.

4.3 Occupation, Grade and Union Office-holding

4.3.a Occupation and Distribution of Shop Stewards

Informants participating in the questionnaire and interview stages of the research worked in a wide range of occupations. These included several professional jobs, such as accountant, surveyor, architect, planner, librarian and social worker, a range of other fairly senior white collar jobs, such as computer advisor and administrator, several technicians and a wide range of clerical jobs such as housing benefits clerk and word-processor operator. The largest single occupational category identified was social worker (12.5%).

Given the wide range of jobs and the absence of sufficient sizeable groups in specific occupations for purposes of comparative analysis, much of the subsequent discussion of the occupational factor is organised around job grade. The interview data, however, do provide the material for the discussion of the relation between union activism and some particular occupations.

The overall distribution of informants answering the questionnaire by grade has been given in Table 3 (Ch 3 page 124). Grouped according to job status, these figures can be represented as follows. The status classification of grades follows the work of Nicholson et al. (1981) and Stone (1984).

Table 10: Informants answering questionnaire by Occupational Status

Low Status		
Scale 1	3	(4.7%)
Scale 2	9	(14.1%)
Nursery Nurse 1	2	(3.1%)
Sub-total	14	(21.9%)
Middle Status		
Scale 3	5	(7.8%)
Scale 4	5	(7.8%)
Scale 5	9	(14.1%)
Scale 6	10	(15.6%)
Sub-total	29	(45.3%)
High Status		
SO1/2	8	(12.5%)
PO	3	(4.7%)
Social Worker 3	8	(12.5%)
Social Worker 6	1	(1.6%)
Sub-total	20	(31.3%)
Missing	1	(1.6%)
Total	64	(100%)

(N = 64)

The questionnaire data was analysed using crosstabulations to explore possible relationships between grade and aspects of union office-holding. A number of questions were asked to identify the pattern of union activism. These included membership and office-holding on departmental shop stewards' committees and the branch executive.

There seemed to be little link between grade and holding a post on the departmental shop stewards committee, except that the three informants on Principal Officer grade did not. There were a number of posts available on most departmental shop stewards' committees, including chair, secretary and minutes secretary, but perhaps the

most important post was chief shop steward. Under the existing union facilities agreement chief shop stewards were entitled to three days per week off work for union duties. Of the ten (15.6%) informants who were chief shop stewards one was on grade 2, one on grade 3, two on grade 4, two on grade 5, one on grade 6 and three on Senior Officer 1/2. Thus holding of the important office of chief shop steward appeared not to be tied to any particular grades.

Those on higher grades were slightly more likely to be on the branch committee, supporting tentatively the general thesis that seniority in the job tends to support union activism. 31 (48.4%) of informants were members of the branch committee, including 2 out of 3 stewards at PO grade, 6 out of 8 stewards at SO1/2 grade, and 7 out of 10 stewards at Scale 6, whereas only 8 out of 17 stewards on grades 1, 2 and 3 were on the branch committee. Those on higher grades also appeared rather more likely to hold posts on the branch committee. Of the 8 stewards on grades 1, 2 and 3 who were on the branch committee 6 held office (75%). Of the 16 stewards on grade 6, SO1/2 and PO grades who were on the branch committee 12 held office (86.7%). The one exception to this pattern was that none of the social workers held posts on the branch committee, although three of the field social workers were members of it. This may have been a result of the demands of their jobs, an occupation factor, or the 'relative autonomy' of union organisation within F&CS, a departmental factor.

Attendance at constituency meetings tended to decline a little with seniority of grade, except that all eight social workers attended constituency meetings. None of the 3 informants at PO level attended constituency meetings and only 3 of the 8 at SO level did, whereas a majority of those on other grades, except grade 1, did. Attendance at constituency meetings, however, may need to be explained more in departmental than occupational terms, since it depended partly upon level of union organisation and frequency of constituency meetings within the department. There seemed little correlation between grade and attendance in a typical month at various other meetings, such as branch sub-committees.

4.3.b Occupation and Attitudes to Being a Shop Steward

Informants were asked a number of questions about their attitudes to being a shop steward. These included their views of what made someone a good steward and the good and bad things about being a shop steward. Informants were also asked how they became elected as a shop steward.

The majority of shop stewards had originally become union office-holders because they were asked to by their work-mates (15, 23.4%) or were the only volunteer (19, 29.7%). The other most popular response related to interest in trade unionism (19, 29.7%). These findings support the general findings of research on shop stewards that a

majority of union office-holders start off as reluctant representatives, although the degree of interest in trade unionism indicated should not be under-valued. When broken down by occupational status these figures still show a majority of reluctant representatives at all grades, although this is slightly less strong in the case of the higher grades.

Table 11: How Informants Became Shop Stewards
How did you become elected as a shop steward?
Please rank upto three answers in order of preference.

	First Ranking	Second Ranking	Third Ranking
I was asked by work colleagues to stand for election	15 (23.4%)	20 (31.3%)	12 (18.8%)
No one else was prepared to do the job	19 (29.7%)	16 (25.0%)	13 (20.3%)
I am interested in trade unionism	19 (29.7%)	14 (21.9%0	11 (17.2%)
I thought I could do a better job than the existing shop steward	2 (3.1%)	4 (6.3%)	8 (12.5%)
I decided to stand after a dispute at work	5 (7.8%)	3 (4.7%)	3 (4.7%)

(N = 64)

The first two statement indicate in varying degrees that informants took up union office because of pressure from others combined with a sense of social responsibility. These represent 'push' rather than 'pull' factors. The other three responses indicate more of a voluntary action on the part of the individual. 53.1% of the first choices and 56.3% of second choices fall into the 'push' category.

When these results are broken down by grade a similar pattern emerges, except that higher grades tended to rate interest in trade unionism slightly more highly. The following three tables indicate reasons for being a shop steward by grade.

Table 12: How Informants Became Shop Stewards - Low Status Stewards
How did you become elected as a shop steward?
Please rank upto three answers in order of preference.

	First Ranking	Second Ranking	Third Ranking	
I was asked by work colleagues to stand for election	3	4	3	
No one else was prepared to do the job	4	3	2	
I am interested in trade unionism	5	3	2	
I thought I could do a better job than the existing shop steward	1	0	0	
I decided to stand after a dispute at work	0	2	0	(N = 14)

Table 13: How Informants Became Shop Stewards - Middle Status Stewards. How did you become elected as a shop steward?
Please rank upto three answers in order of preference.

	First Ranking	Second Ranking	Third Ranking	
I was asked by work colleagues to stand for election	5	11	6	
No one else was prepared to do the job	11	6	6	
I am interested in trade unionism	6	6	5	
I thought I could do a better job than the existing shop steward	0	2	5	
I decided to stand after a dispute at work	4	0	1	(N = 29)

Table 14: How Informants Became Shop Stewards - High Status Stewards
How did you become elected as a shop steward?
Please rank upto three answers in order of preference.

	First Ranking	Second Rankig	Third Ranking	
I was asked by work colleagues to stand for election	6	5	4	
No one else was prepared to do the job	4	7	5	
I am interested in trade unionism	8	5	4	
I thought I could do a better job than the existing shop steward	1	1	2	
I decided to stand after a dispute at work	1	0	1	(N = 20)

These tables do not indicate any substantial grade difference in reasons for becoming a shop steward, although higher status stewards tended to rate interest in trade unionism more highly. This may support the "educated radicalism" thesis or it may reflect the fact that employees at this level were either less easily pressured into union office-holding or less willing to admit that they had been pressured into taking union office.

Attitudes to union office-holding were explored in the questionnaire study by two types of questions. Informants were asked how they would define a good shop steward in a rank order question with space for further comments, and what they considered to be the good and bad things about being a shop steward. These questions were employed to elicit different perceptions of the shop steward role.

Table 15: Views of a Good Shop Steward

How would you define a good shop steward?

Please rank the following statements in order of importance.

	First Ranking	Second Ranking	Third Ranking	Fourth Ranking
A good shop steward is someone who keeps their members well informed.	20 (31.3%)	17 (26.6%)	13 (20.3%)	9 (14.1%)
A good shop steward is someone who gives a lead to members.	7 (10.9%)	6 (9.4%)	13 (20.3%)	12 (18.8%)
A good shop steward is someone who encourages their members to participate in NALGO.	10 (15.6%)	5 (7.8%)	8 (2.5%)	18 (28.1%)
A good shop steward is someone who represents their members well at departmental level.	13 (20.3%)	14 (21.9%)	11 ((17.2%)	10 (15.6%)
A good shop steward is someone who is effective in sorting out day-to-day grievances.	11 (17.2%)	19 (29.7%)	17 (26.6%)	9 (14.1%) (N = 64)

These answers show that the information communicating role was most highly valued by the shop stewards, maybe because such work is so essential to the operation of trade unions as collective organisations. If this task is not performed then other activities of the union, like encouraging membership participation are not possible. The relatively low ranking of participation may be explained in terms of anwers which stressed the apathy of members as one of the main obstacles shop stewards encountered. If encouraging membership participation is seen as a worthwhile but near impossible

task, then it is unlikely to be ranked highly if it is not seen as achievable. The leadership role too was rejected, except by a minority, maybe because it was viewed as elitist or undemocratic. There were no obvious differences by grade in the answers to this question.

Informants were also given space on the questionnaire to write in their comments about what made a good shop steward. These responses fell into three distinct categories. Twelve stressed moral and personal qualities with statements like:-

> "Infinite patience and good humour."
>
> "Commonsense, irreverence, humility."
>
> "An ability to listen."

Eight stressed political awareness, with statements such as:-

> "Active socialist"
>
> "Having a knowledge of local and national politics and economic policy."
>
> "Encouraging members to support other workers in dispute, and support for oppressed nations, e.g. South Africe, Palestine, to bring issues of disarmament and world peace to members."

and fifteen gave answers which emphasised competence as a union representative. These included statements such as:-

> "Hold regular shop meetings. Good communicator."
>
> "To be able to communicate with management; to be able to negotiate a compromise; to make themselves available to members."
>
> "Ability to explain union decisions (with reasons) to members in ways they can understand (no jargon)."

"Represents the members' views and follows through the decisions taken at departmental meetings."

In terms of grade among the eight who emphasised political awareness and sense of internationalism six were either social workers or on SO1/2. This supports the "educated radicalism" thesis mentioned by Nicholson and the arguments of Joyce, Corrigan and Hayes (1988).

The second set of questions about the role of the shop steward asked informants what they considered to be the good things and the bad things about being a shop steward. Grade appeared to have little influence on views about the good things about being a shop steward, but there was some connection between grade and views of the bad things about being a shop steward.

Table 16: Views of the Good Things About Being a Shop Steward
What are the good things about being a shop steward?
Please rank in order of importance.
(Table shows first three rankings)

	First Ranking	Second Ranking	Third Ranking
I get more information about NALGO.	7 (10.9%)	3 (4.7%)	4 (6.3%)
I find trade union work interesting.	10 (15.6%)	17 (26.6%)	10 (15.6%)
It makes me feel more confident.	2 (3.1%)	6 (9.4%)	6 (9.4%)
I enjoy sorting out people's problems.	(18.8%)	12 (15.6%)	10 10 (15.6%)
Successes in negotiating.	5 (7.8%)	12 (18.8%)	8 (12.5%)
Going on trade union education courses.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (4.7%)
Meeting people through the union.	2 (3.1%)	2 (3.1%0	6 (9.4%)
I have learned a lot from being a shop steward.	18 (28.1%)	6 (9.4%)	9 (14.1%)
			(N = 64)

The one area where there appeared to be a noticeable difference by grade was in response to the statement "I have learned a lot from being a shop steward." Six low status stewards put this statement first, as did eight middle status stewards, but only three high status stewards. Presumably higher status stewards had more sources of other information about how the Council worked. This learning aspect, almost a career development aspect, of union work was commented on by some interviewees. One (middle status) shop steward explained how shop stewards learned about promotion opportunities:-

"I think probably people get promoted because they get to know more about the Poly, when they know the system better, they can see the opportunities as well. I think the average member of the Polytechnic doesn't see the structures as shop stewards see them as laying out on paper. You can read a departmental structure plan and not know all the background noise a steward has and so you know about opportunities, you know about vacancies before they arise. And because you know a lot more people you get a feeling for the person they need in that job and whether it's a good department to work for and so you tend to go for the jobs that you're going to get."

Another shop steward considered that her experiences as a shop steward when on a low grade as a data preparation operator had assisted her with college work, which she was undertaking in hopes of career development.

"It helped me a lot with my college work, because it's surprising what you can learn, what I normally wouldn't have access to as well, because if I was doing a project on something at college, it would give me access to material that I would normally never see, and because I have been a shop steward, I've still got links with a lot of friends at branch office and I can still find out what is happening, so I still use these contacts for my college work and things like that.

Table 17: Views of Bad Things about Being a Shop Steward
What are the bad things about being a shop steward?
Please rank in order of importance.
(Table shows first three rankings)

	First Ranking	Second Ranking	Third Ranking
Pressure from management.	6 (9.4%)	6 (9.4%)	8 (12.5%)
The members expect too much of shop stewards.	11 (17.2%)	9 (14.1%)	5 (7.8%)
The responsibility can be worrying.	9 (14.1%)	8 (12.5%)	5 (7.8%)
It creates difficulties in doing one's job.	18 (28.1%)	13 (20.3%)	15 (23.4%)
Stress from excessive work.	8 (12.5%)	9 (14.1%)	13 (20.3%)
Conflicts with family/social life.	4 (6.3%)	6 (9.4%)	6 (9.4%)
Problems of understanding how NALGO works.	(6.3%)	4 (4.7%)	3 (6.3%) 4
Reduces leisure time.	0 (0.0%)	5 (7.8%)	2 (3.1%)
			(N = 64)

Pressure from management was felt slightly more by staff on lower grades, although only a minority of informants put it first (9.4%), second (9.4%) or third (12.5%). Those on higher grades especially tended to rank highly the response "It creates difficulties in doing my job". 18 (28.1%) informants ranked this answer first, 1 on grade 2, 1 on grade 3, 5 on grade 5, 3 on grade 6, 4 on SO1/2 and 2 on PO, (a clear majority in the last two grades). 13 informants (20.3%) ranked this factor second and 15 (23.4%) third. Those on higher

grades also seemed more aware of conflicts with family and social life, with the four informants who ranked this factor first being on grade 6 or above, as were 4 of the six who ranked it second.

The answers to these questions about the good and bad things about the role of the shop steward when analysed by grade indicate possible differences in the relationship between job and union work for shop stewards at different levels of the organisation. While low status stewards found that union work gave access to information which they would not normally receive during their work, this was much less the case for higher status stewards. For higher status stewards there was more perceived conflict between job and union work, probably because the tasks associated with the job were more complicated and open-ended. This raises the issue of whether the job make it easier or more difficult to be a steward. This issue will be explored in section 4.3.e, which deals with the operation of union facility agreements and section 4.3.f, which discusses reasons for shop steward turnover. Before then two specific aspects of shop steward behaviour, bargaining priorities and industrial action will be examined.

4.3.c Occupation and Bargaining Priorities

In examining the possible relationship between occupation and bargaining priorities we are looking at how work experience and situation might lead to awareness of particular issues. This can take the form of responsiveness to the needs and wishes of the immediate constituency, and many stewards in their replies to questions about the role of the shop steward had stressed the representative rather than the leadership role, or it might reflect an ability to take a wider social and political view, which could be encouraged by working in occupations which particularly foster social awareness.

In the questionnaire study informants were asked to answer a ranked order question about bargaining priorities. In computer analysis these answers were broken down by gender, grade and department. In subsequent interviews questions were asked about perceived differences in bargaining priorities and their relation to factors such as gender, occupation/grade and department. Table 18 shows the overall answers to questions about bargaining priorities. The two most popular first priorities were "pay increases for the lower paid" and "service conditions". "Pay increases for the lower paid" may have been popular because it reflected NALGO's national campaigns against low pay in local government and also because it was seen as an equal opportunities issue. Higher pay and job security, traditional trade union concerns were also rated fairly highly.

Table 18: Views of NALGO's Negotiating Priorities
What do you think NALGO's negotiating priorities should be? Please rank in order of importance

	First Ranking	Second Ranking	Third Ranking
Service conditions	15 (23.4%)	9 ((14.1%)	10 (15.6%)
Higher pay	7 (10.9%)	11 (17.2%)	7 (10.9½5)
Equal opportunities	4 (6.3%)	5 (7.8%)	5 (7.8%)
Shorter working week	2 (3.1%)	3 (4.7%)	5 (7.8%)
Job-sharing agreements	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Longer holidays	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Health and safety	0 (0.0%)	8 (12.5%)	13 (20.3%)
More time off for trade union work	1 (1.6%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.6%)
New technology agreements	1 (1.6%)	1 (1.6%)	2 (3.1%)
Pay increase for the lower paid	23 (35.9%)	13 (20.3%)	6 (9.4%)
Job security	6 (9.4%)	7 (10.9%)	6 (9.4%)
More opportunities for training and promotion	2 (3.1%)	4 (6.3%)	4 (6.3%)
Workplace nursery	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.6%)	5 (7.8%) (N = 64)

In interpreting these results it is important to bear in mind that bargaining priorities reflect a number of factors. These include

political and social attitudes, work experience and situation and also estimates of what the union can and has achieved, for example an issue may no longer be a bargaining priority if the union is seen to have already achieved as much as it can in this field. This may well have been the case with "new technology agreements", where a major agreement had been reached by the branch at the end of a dispute with the Council (see Chapter 2.3.e). Thus answers to questions about bargaining priorities must therefore be interpreted in context.

Those on Senior Officer and Principal Officer grades tended to rank "service conditions" and "higher pay" as priorities 1 and 2. Pay rises for the lower paid (the most popular demand) attracted slightly stronger support among the lower grades, but 5 of the 8 social workers put this first. Among the lowest paid stewards, those on grades 1, 2 and 3, 13 (72.2%) ranked this priority first or second. Grade had no discernible influence on other negotiating priorities.

On the one hand those in senior posts were aware of the need for higher pay for senior grades to recruit and retain staff in competion with the private sector, but they also often saw the need to improve the position of the lower paid, i.e. they expressed a sense of social obligation or trade union solidarity to those less well off; on the other hand those in less senior posts tended to see tackling low pay as a priority because of both their own experience and the demands of their constituents. Thus there were not sharp divisions among shop stewards over pay bargaining priorities, given these values and maybe

also the presence of national bargaining on pay and conditions of service, which meant it was not a policy issue decided directly by the branch.

4.3.d Occupation and Experiences of Industrial Action

An examination of the relation between occupation and experiences of industrial action needs to consider issues of both militancy and opportunity to take industrial action. In the case of the higher status workers there was no evidence that higher status led to more caution about taking industrial action, although this is often supposed to be the case for white-collar employees. Indeed in one instance during the new technology dispute (2.3.e) higher status seemed to lead to a sense of obligation that higher paid workers should come out on strike while lower status workers stayed at work, since those on higher pay could afford it more easily, and this occurred in the Employment Department. This all occurred within the framework of a union and political culture which to a degree treated industrial action as a legitimate activity for all employees.

The questions in the questionnaire study were asked before the national NALGO strikes of Summer 1989. These events led to all NALGO members in local government being called upon to take short strikes of one day, two days and three days per week in a programme of escalating strike action. The timing of the questionnaire study

explains why some informants report no experience of industrial action. 53 (82.8%) had taken part in some form of industrial action as a member of NALGO.

The most popular forms of industrial action were no cover for vacant posts, and short strikes of half a day or one-day. Some of these short strikes may have been symbolic, political protests in support of other groups of workers or over rate-capping.

Table 19: Experiences of Industrial Action as a Member of NALGO
Please tick any of the following forms of industrial action which you have taken part in.

Overtime ban	18	(18.1%)
Work to rule	15	(23.4%)
No cover of vacant posts	36	(56.3%)
Ban on use of telephones	12	(18.8%)
Refusal to take on new duties	23	(35.9%)
Ban on talking to councillors	13	(20.3%)
Ban on use of cars for work purposes	9	(14.1%)
Half-day strike	32	(50.0%)
One-day strike	39	(60.9%)
Strike lasting under 1 week	4	(6.3%)
Strike lasting 1 week - 1 month	1	(1.6%)
Strike lasting 1 month - 3 months	7	(10.9%)
Strike lasting over 3 months	3	(4.7%)

(N = 64)

There appeared to be some connection between grade and experience of industrial action although this may be also a function of department. It has to be remembered that grade and department and gender are related in that those departments with more higher grade posts have more male staff. Those on higher grades were more likely to have taken industrial action. This may partly be a result of longer periods of service. On grades 1 and 2 only 50% had taken industrial action, while all of those on grades 3 and 4 had done so, as had a majority of those on grades 5 and 6. All those on Senior Officer grade had taken industrial action, as had all the social workers and nursery nurses. Thus these results give no support to any thesis that seniority in work acts as a barrier to taking industrial action.

Some forms of industrial action had been taken particularly by selected grades and it is reasonable to suggest this was related to work content and to seniority. The ban on use of telephones had been operated by all six field social workers and a minority of staff on grades 3, 4, 5, 6 and Senior Officer level. The ban on talking to councillors had been carried out only by staff on grade 5 and above and is obviously related to higher occupational grade, since servicing Council committees and advising councillors is more likely to be a feature of work at this level. This is one of the clearest instances of a connection between grade and union activism, since it was a form of industrial action only operable by workers in particular work situations.

This is an interesting illustration of the relationship between occupational position and the capacity for union activism. During the national pay dispute of Summer 1989 after the one-day, two-day and three-day national strikes NALGO pulled out key groups of workers. This is a tactic which has certain advantages for trade unions because it allows some workers, whose absence may be particularly disruptive, to take action, often on substantial levels of strike pay, while the rest of the union's membership stays at work and pays a strike levy. The 'militancy' of certain key groups of workers can thus be explained in terms of work situation rather than pre-existing political and social attitudes.

4.3.e Occupation and Experience of Union Facility Agreements

One of the clear perceptions of interviewees was that it was easier to be a shop steward in some occupations than others. This related partly to flexibility and partly to other pressures of work, but especially to flexibility. At the time of the research NALGO shop stewards worked according to a union facilities agreement which allowed them to take time off as needed to do union work. On the surface this looked like a very good agreement from the point of view of the union, because it suggested that union representatives would be allowed to take as much time off as they needed to do their union work, but the problem with it was that there was no cover for the job the shop steward had vacated. This led to problems for stewards of

work piling up and sometimes pressure from colleagues, managers and clients. In some jobs which were inflexible or involved supplying front line services to the general public it was often difficult or impossible in practical terms to leave the job to do union work.

But is it difficult in some jobs for people to get time off?
"Yes it is. If somebody works shifts in a children's home then they work with one other person for a shift. It can be difficult on a personal working relationship just to say 'I'm entitled to this time off and therefore I'm going to go." There's no cover for people, which would be what would make it realistic, but there's no problem put in the way of someone leaving. The problem is of leaving colleagues unsupported and people don't feel able to do that, to walk off a small unit leaving work undone. It's not the same as if you've got paperwork that's not been done. You can do that a couple of hours later. If you're running a unit where you have to do something with kids or elderly people or in a day centre where you're working with mentally handicapped or people like that all the time, you can't just go off and leave them to go to a meeting and that does cause some difficulties sometimes."
(Ex-shop steward F&CS)

What this statement reveals is the contradiction between the formal union facilities agreement, which legitimated employees leaving their jobs to do union work, and the practical difficulties of implementing the agreement without cover. For workers in jobs which were inflexible, where they were dealing with clients whose needs had to be attended to instantly or continuously, leaving the job to do union work posed real problems of letting down their colleagues and leaving work situations which they often considered to be already under-staffed. Part of this problem, as the above statement indicates, lies in the perceived difference between jobs dealing with people and jobs dealing with paperwork. When looking at administrative jobs, however, the level of seniority is important. In more senior

administrative jobs it appeared possible to reschedule and postpone work, but for more junior administrative and clerical workers, the problems of taking time off could be more acute than for professional workers. Another interviewee from F&CS described the problem as follows:-

How well do union facilities agreements work?
"It's very, very patchy, and it depends very much on the nature of the job that you do. Within F&CS, for example, someone who is not tied to a desk job all the time, someone who is perhaps a field worker, case worker or something like that is more able to find the time to do the job of shop steward than people who are in administrative jobs, who find it more difficult. Because you take a typist away from the typing pool and it's typing that doesn't get done and it relies on other people doing that work. If I leave my office then my work will still need to be done when I get back there, although colleagues will support me by taking messages and things and perhaps the amount of work that I take on is less as a consequence. It is easier for me to do that than it is for a clerk or even, we've got a problem at the moment, for someone who is a home care organiser. She has a clear caseload and other people cannot absorb any of that caseload. For her to take time off to do trade union duties means the work doesn't get done. I think that sort of problem discourages some people who are in those sorts of admin jobs, and ironically it's the low-paid, often women workers. There is a sort of built-in discouragement for them to come forward as shop stewards." (Shop steward F&CS)

The trade union facilities agreement worked rather differently in the case of chief shop stewards and branch officers, who had fixed amounts of times off, sometimes with another worker being put in to cover their jobs. Chief shop stewards had three days facility time per week for union duties. Several interviewees discussed attempts by NALGO to negotiate more cover for shop stewards so that it would be easier for members to become union representatives.

"We're involved in negotiations with management to try and ensure that it's not just time off but cover as well and that is for people

who are in those types of jobs where it is difficult for them to get away to do trade union duties, because I think a lot of that reflects the sort of different levels of responsibility and the different number of issues that people take on."
(Shop steward F&CS)

A number of questions were asked in the questionnaire study about the operation of the union facilities agreement and the relationship between job and union work. These questions attempted to explore both how the job could assist union work and also where the conflicts might arise. In the interviews the relation between job and union work was explored by asking whether in the interviewee's opinion there were particular jobs which made it difficult to become a union office-holder. A number of jobs were mentioned, such as residential social worker, departmental secretary, typist, nursery nurse, and benefits clerk. Generally the jobs mentioned as difficult to combine with union work possessed at least one of two characteristics: dealing with clients or the general public and being part of a 'front-line' service where it was hard physically to leave the job; or being in a lower status administrative or clerical grade, where ability to carry out union work depended very much on the goodwill of work colleagues to cover the work of the absent shop steward. In these situation the cover issue was clearly of crucial importance.

In the questionnaire study informants were asked six questions covering the operation of the union facilities agreement and the relationship between their job and their union work. Firstly informants were asked approximately how many hours per week they spent on NALGO work.

Table 20: Hours per Week Spent on NALGO Work
Approximately how many hours a week do you spend on NALGO work? (including time attending meetings)

0-5 hours	20 (31.3%)	
6-10 hours	24 (37.5%)	
11-15 hours	7 (10.9%)	
16-20 hours	7 (10.9%)	
over 20 hours	4 (6.3%)	
Missing	2 (3.2%)	
Total	64 (100%)	(N = 64)

There was no clear connection between grade and hours spent on NALGO work in a typical week, except that six of the eight social workers spent 11 or more hours per week on NALGO work. So level of activism in the department may be more important, and of course time spent on union work will increase at specific times. The answers to this question did not reveal any substantial grade variations, but the answers to the next question did throw some further light on particular job-related barriers to taking time off for union work. Informants were asked whether they encountered any difficulties in taking the time off work for union duties which they were formally entitled to take. 21 (32.8%) answered that they did encounter difficulties. These included the two residential social workers, 3 of the six field social workers, 1 of the 2 nursery nurses and a minority (around a third) of the other grades. Nonetheless this may have been an underestimate given other answers later in the

questionnaire and in interviews. The problem relates to the issue of the absence of cover. It appeared that many shop stewards were in a situation where no one in authority was explicitly challenging or impeding their operation of their rights to time off under the union facilities agreement, but there were still practical difficulties about taking time off. These difficulties were explored in the following question.

Table 21: Sources of Difficulty in Taking Time Off for Union Work
Which is the source of most difficulty? Please rank

	First Ranking	Second Ranking	Third Ranking
Pressure from managers	9 (14.1%0	2 (3.1%)	1 (1.6%)
Pressure from colleagues	1 (1.6%)	6 (9.4%)	4 (6.3%0
Pressure from service users	5 (7.8%)	3 (4.7%)	2 (3.1%)
Other factors	13 (20.3%0	2 (3.1%)	2 (3.1%)

(N = 64)

In write-in comments 22 informants made references to pressure of work, either to do with inflexibility or volume of work piling up. This was not a factor arising directly from management pressure, but either arose from the work situation or from the steward's commitment to their own work. Among these comments were:-

"I am part-time and work alone - so I have not much time to spare and the work has to be done."
(School clerical assistant)

"Being a residential social worker I often have to do trade union duties in my own time; it is then difficult to take time back because residential social work offers minimum staff cover."
(Residential social worker)

"We may be short staffed if both stewards attend a meeting."
(Education benefits clerk)

"Consciousness of not getting work done myself."
(Housing benefits officer)

"No cover."
(Nursery nurse)

"Peaks of work load - immovable commitments."
(Technician)

The problem of a backlog of work tended to increase slightly with grade, although a majority of all grades except grade 2 identified it as a problem. Interviews showed some were conscious of a backlog of work but did not let it bother them, while others tended to work late to cover all their work.

Is there a problem of work piling up?
"The work does pile up, but I think the union's established a place for itself in this department [Land and Planning] and the management doesn't complain about it, or if they do never in a serious way."

Is that worrying for individuals though when work is piling up?
"Oh yes, my desk's awash with work that's not been done." (laughter)

So how do you manage?
"Well I mean, it just doesn't get done, you can only do what you can do, can't you. You spend a lot of time explaining to people why you're not doing their planning."

Some people have said they work late in the evenings.
"No, no there's enough pressure during the daytime, and as far as I'm concerned anyway the evening's my own time. I don't donate it to the Council."
(Shop steward in Land and Planning)

On the other hand one ex-shop steward reported that as a social worker she did work into the evenings to carry out both her job and her union work.

"Well I was always pressed for time, but having said that you work flexible hour contracts, no one actually demands that you are at your desk from nine to five, it's quite easy to attend meetings and put off other things to later. It often meant I was working until seven or eight at night to attend to the demands of everything, so I suppose I worked, well if you think about only doing trade union duties in work time, I worked a lot of overtime, but I never regarded it that way. I always regarded it that I would do a lot of trade union work in my own time, which perhaps is not the strongest trade union point of view, but inevitably that ends up being the case for a lot of people."
(Ex-shop steward in F&CS)

In the questionnaire study informants were asked when they did their union work, whether mostly in work time, about half in work time and half in own time, or mostly in their own time. 32 (50%) said they carried out their union duties mostly in work time, 27 (42.2.%) about half in work time and half in their own time, and for 5 (7.8%) union work was mostly performed in their own time. These answers did show some relationship to grade as indicated in Table 22.

Table 22: Times when Union Work Performed by Grade

	High Status	Middle Status	Low Status
Mostly in work time	12 (60.0%)	16 (55.2%)	4 (28.6%)
About half in work time and half in own time	7 (35.0%)	12 (41.4%)	7 (50.0%)
Mostly in own time	1 (5.0%)	1 (3.4%)	3 (21.4%)

(N = 64)

What these figures suggest is that the union facilities agreement tended to work better for those in higher grades, who had more control over their work and were therefore more able to do union work in work time. Of the 5 shop stewards who reported that they did union work mostly in their own time, 2 were on grade 2, 1 on Nursery Nurse I, 1 on grade 6 and 1 on Principal Officer grade. Of the 3 informants on grade 1, all did union work about half in work time and half in own time, as did the probation officer and the residential social worker grade 6 and 2 of the 3 Principal Officer grade stewards. The groups in which a majority of stewards did union work mostly in work time (i.e. where facility agreements were working best) were grades 3, 5, 6, Senior Officer and Social Worker 3.

Informants in the questionnaire study were asked two questions about the relation between job and union work. These were:-

"Does your job help you to be effective as a shop steward?"
and
"Does your job conflict in any way with your work as a shop steward?"

These two aspects of the relationship between job and union work were separated out so that both sides could be examined. The following tables (23 and 24) indicate the overall answers and then the breakdown by grade will be discussed.

Table 23: Does your Job Help You to be Effective as a Shop Steward?

	YES	NO
by giving access to useful information	39 (60.9%)	23 (35.9%)
by allowing easy access to your members	50 (78.1%)	12 (18.8%)
giving you flexibility in organizing your time and work	51 (79.7%)	11 (17.2%)
helping you develop skills useful in union work, (e.g. public speaking, organizing meetings)	33 (51.6%)	29 (45.3%)
giving access to senior management	(56.3%)	36 27 (42.2%)

(N = 64)

Table 24: Does your Job Conflict in any way with Your Work as a Shop Steward?

	YES	NO
conflict of time demands	50 (78.1%)	13 (20.3%)
threat to promotion prospects	36 (56.3%)	21 (32.8%)
problem of building up a backlog of work	40 (62.5%)	23 (35.9%)
inflexibility of work	56 (87.5%)	7 (10.9%)
conflict of responsibilities/loyalties (wearing two hats)	29 (45.3%)	35 (54.7%)

(N = 64)

On initial analysis the answers to the questions about time flexibility appear rather contradictory inasmuch as 51 stewards (79.7%) said their jobs did help union work by allowing flexibility in the organisation of work and 56 (87.5%) said that inflexibility of

work was a problem, so many informants must have replied yes to both statements. The two questions were printed on the questionnaire on separate pages and maybe the answers would have been more obviously consistent if the questions had been on the same page. On further examination, however, it appears that these answers may relate to different situations and both indicate the importance of the job flexibility issue. Where aspects of work were flexible this was felt to be helpful with performance of union work, but where aspects of work were inflexible this constituted a problem.

Access to time flexibility at work increased a bit with seniority. Those on lower grades, especially the three informants on scale 1 were more likely to report that their jobs did not help union work by allowing flexible use of time, whereas all those on Senior Officer and Principal Officer grades found their work flexible, as did all the social workers. Some questions produced a fairly even split between yes and no answers. In the case of "access to useful information" the answers varied not surprisingly with grade. Those on higher grades were more likely to find their jobs assisted union work by giving access to useful information, as the following table illustrates.

Table 25: Does Your Job Help You to be Effective as a Shop Steward by Giving Access to Useful Information?

	High Status	Middle Status	Low Status
YES	14 (70.0%)	15 (53.6%)	4 (30.8%)
NO	6 (30.0%)	13 (46.4%)	9 (69.2%)

(N = 64)

In the case of access to useful skills it might have been expected that those in higher grade jobs would benefit more from this factor, but an analysis by grade suggested that grade was not producing a major difference here (see table 26). There was some difference between low status stewards and the rest, but not between high and middle status stewards.

Table 26: Does Your Job Help You to be Effective as a Shop Steward by Helping You Develop Skills Useful in Union Work?

	High Status	Middle Status	Low Status	
YES	11 (55.0%)	15 (53.6%)	6 (46.2%)	
NO	9 (45.0%)	13 (46.4%)	7 (53.8%)	(N =64)

Table 27: Does Your Job Help you to be Effective as a Shop Steward by Giving Access to Senior Management?

	High Status	Middle Status	Low Status	
YES	15 (75.0%)	11 (39.3%)	9 (64.3%)	
NO	5 (25.0%)	17 (60.7%)	5 (35.7%)	(N =64)

Here it was the middle status stewards whose jobs were least helpful in giving access to senior management, while both high status and low status stewards fared better in this respect. Thus there was a relationship to grade, but not perhaps the one that would have been expected.

There were few further comments to this question about how the job helped to perform the role of the shop steward, although one of the nursery nurses commented:-

"My job helps as a shop steward because I know more about it than management."

When looking at conflicts between job and union work a number of interesting differences by grade appear. We have noted earlier that problems of job inflexibility were experienced more by lower status workers. The reverse side of this was that higher status workers were more likely to experience conflicts of time demands, presumably because they had more autonomy in how they allocated their time.

Table 28: Does Your Job Conflict with Your Work as a Shop Steward in Terms of Conflict of Time Demands?

	High Status	Middle Status	Low Status
YES	18	25	6
	(90.0%)	(86.2%)	(46.2%)
NO	2	4	7
	(10.0%)	(13.8%)	(53.8%)

(N = 64)

The ability of the higher status workers to do more of their union work in work time, i.e. to take more advantage of the union

facilities agreement, meant that they were more likely to experience pressures at work because of conflicting demands on their time. No doubt this also reflected the more open-ended nature of their jobs. This trend can be seen too when looking at answers to the the question about job conflicts because of inflexibility of work.

Table 29: Does Your Job Conflict with Your Work as a Shop Steward in Terms of Inflexibility of Work?

	High Status	Middle Status	Low Status
YES	0 (0.0%)	6 (20.7%)	1 (7.7%)
NO	20 (100.0%)	23 (79.3%)	12 (92.3%)

(N = 64)

Thus inflexibility was experienced most strongly by middle status stewards, although it should be noted that only a minority reported inflexibility of work as a conflict between job and union work in answer to this question. We have also indicated that some answers treated inflexibility as a more serious problem than others.

Overall the relation between grade and union work can be summarised by stating that lower status stewards tended to suffer more from inflexibility of work, while higher status stewards tended to suffer more from the problem of an accumulating backlog of work. For both groups the issue of cover was important to make the operation of agreements on union facility time more practicable.

4.3.f Occupation and Shop Steward Turnover

An analysis of shop steward turnover rates was conducted by examining the branch list of shop stewards from 1983 to 1989. These lists supplied information which could be broken down by department and gender, but not by occupation/grade. The average length of service for stewards was two years.

In interviews reasons for shop steward turnover were explored. Existing shop stewards were asked why they had decided to continue in office and ex-shop stewards were asked why they had resigned from union office-holding. In addition stewards were asked for their general perception of reasons for shop steward turnover.

Both 'positive' and 'negative' work-related reasons were given for resigning as a shop steward. In some cases stewards had ceased to hold office when they changed jobs or gained promotion.

What job are you doing currently?
I'm a team leader. That's when I stopped being a steward."
(Ex-shop steward F&CS)

"I think people tend to leave the shop stewards' committee when they get another job. They feel that they have six months probationary service hanging over their head, so it's not a good idea, it's not conducive to being a steward. So a lot say 'I'll get in touch after six months' and never come back."
(Shop steward Polytechnic)

In other cases informants in interview suggested that the reasons for standing down as a steward arose from pressure from colleagues, workloads and lack of cover. Thus the effective operation of

facility agreements may be more important in terms of stewards continuing in office over a substantial period of time, than in terms of initial willingness to stand for office. In this sense good facility agreements are important for trade unions as collective organisations. Unions need some continuity in union office-holding to build up expertise, as well as the election of new stewards to provide new energy and prevent stewards getting out of touch with the members. There is also an important principle of union democracy involved that members should choose whom they wish to represent them as shop stewards, and this cannot be achieved if the design of some jobs makes it difficult or impossible for their incumbents to take on and continue in union office-holding.

The following extract from an interview with one of the branch officers who had formerly been a chief shop steward in the Education Department illustrates these pressures.

How long do these shop stewards stay in office?
"Not very long unfortunately. Usually about eighteen months before we lose them, or if we don't lose them they cease to function as an active shop steward. They're still there, but they don't function as an active shop steward, and that's because the pressures are placed on them because they tend to be in secretarial positions, so no one covers their job if they go out to do any trade union duties and it becomes peer pressure on them, because they are leaving their work for somebody else to pick up."

The Education Deparment was one of the departments with a large number of women workers, and women shop stewards, in fairly low status administrative jobs. The gender and departmental variations in shop steward turnover will be explored in subsequent chapters.

4.3.g Occupation and Women's Representation within NALGO

Women's representation in NALGO will be discussed in more detail in chapters 5 and 6. At this stage of the argument, however, it is useful to note that women were over-represented on the lower occupational grades in local government, as indicated earlier in this chapter, that workers on these grades were under-represented in union office-holding and that where workers on these grades did hold union office they experienced more problems of inflexibility of work and were less able to do union work in work time than their more senior colleagues. The problems of women workers in this situation is described in the following extract from an interview with an ex-shop steward. This illustrates the work-related barriers to taking on union office in the first place for many of these women workers.

"In my opinion the only people who regularly work hard and consistently in the department are the clerk typists. Everyone else comes and goes as they see fit. That might be a reason why clerk-typists haven't got the time to be shop steward. ... In the department at senior officer level and above, it's quite easy to say 'I haven't had time to do that, I've had meetings', sort of ethereal meetings all day and not have to account for where these meetings were, whom they were with, when they were, what was the purpose of them. Clerk-typists cannot just get up and walk out, because someone would say 'What are you doing?', but above them everyone just picks up a load of papers and walks out."

The key issue indicated in this statement is the flexibility of work, although it also suggests a relationship between flexibility and ability to control the total overall workload.

4.4 Conclusion: the Relevance of the Occupational Factor

In this chapter the occupational context of local government has been described to provide the necessary framework for analysis of the research findings. Occupational position and grade appeared to support union activism for workers in more senior positions, because of the greater flexibility of work, although they experienced more problems of a backlog of work than lower status workers. For lower status shop stewards inflexibility of work constituted a major barrier to the effective operation of union facility agreements on time off for union work. Therefore this group particularly would benefit from cover being provided for shop stewards to do union work. Given the financial problems of local government at the time of the research (late 1980s) and subsequently such provision was unlikely to be achieved by the union in the forseeable future. It is, however, reasonable to suggest that there is some connection between the under-representation of this group of workers as shop stewards and their difficulties when they did become shop stewards of taking time off for union work. This raises policy issues for unions about the way trade union facility agreements, while applying the same conditions to all employees, can work out more or less favourably for different groups of workers according to their occupation and grade.

CHAPTER 5 SHOP STEWARD ACTIVISM AND GENDER I - UNION OFFICE-HOLDING

5.1 Introduction

The material in the thesis directly dealing with gender is presented in this chapter and the subsequent one, with this chapter discussing gender and union office holding and chapter 6 examining union policy issues concerning gender. This chapter begins with a theoretical discussion of approaches to the study of gender differences in union office-holding. It then considers gender and occupational inequalities, picking up on themes addressed in Chapter 2.2.c and 2.3.b and 2.3.c. The main research findings concerning gender and union office-holding are presented in section 5.4 of this chapter. The material in this section is organised under the following headings:

a) gender and distribution of shop stewards;

b) gender and attitudes to being a shop steward;

c) gender and experiences of industrial action;

d) gender and operation of union facility agreements;

e) gender and shop steward turnover;

f) management harassment of female union officers and stewards;

g) union activism and maintaining a personal life;

h) women at branch officer level;

i) NALGO's attempts to promote women's participation and representation in the union.

The conclusion to this chapter discusses the degree of gender differences in shop steward activism in the light of the research findings.

5.2 Approaches to the Study of Gender Differences in Union Office-holding

This issue raises the question of what exactly do social scientists mean when they refer to gender differences. Firstly the term can refer to differences which occur along gender lines or differences which arise because of gender roles. For instance the work of Fryer et al. (1978) found gender differences among NUPE (National Union of Public Employees) members in terms of access to union office holding, i.e. a difference along gender lines, but they explain this difference in terms of an occupational rather than a gender role factor, namely that women tended to work part-time and men to work full-time and it was easier to combine union office-holding with a full-time job. As their work shows, not all differences which occur along gender lines are necessarily the direct result of differences in gender roles.

Secondly when studying gender differences it is necessary to consider gender roles for both sexes (Feldberg and Glenn 1979). It is not the case simply that women have a gender role which impacts upon their work and union participation, while men have an occupational role

which is unaffected by their gender role. The male gender role in terms of union activism, however, has been relatively unresearched.

Thirdly research should consider both gender differences and gender similarities. Writers on sex and gender difference, such as Oakley (1972) have noted that much research on sex and gender differences has focused on the issue of difference to the exclusion of similarity. This is particularly inappropriate in the area of union participation, since men and women may share many common work experiences which provide a motivation for union activism. As indicated in Chapter 2 2.b the existing literature says much about women's participation and representation, although the limitations of this material have already been commented upon, in that it is better at explaining barriers to participation than motives for participation. Moreover it has often started out from an assumption of gender difference, namely an uncritical acceptance of the common belief that women are less active in unions than men, thus over-estimating men's levels of union activism. The existing literature is inconclusive on the issue of whether gender differences exist in collective bargaining priorities. Heery and Kelly, writing on women union full-time officials (1988a, 1988b, 1989), are two of the few authors to discuss this issue.

It is important to look at both gender differences and gender similarities. This is a major issue in feminist theory both methodologically and politically. The area of women's situation in

trade unions is a useful area for examining these issues, because of the nature of trade unions as collective organisations. There are problems for unions in recognising diversity of membership interests, since unions are formed on the recognition of common interests of workers; nonetheless more politically sophisticated approaches to trade union unity recognise the existence of membership heterogeneity and accept that structures and policies have to be organised to take account of a diversity of membership interests, including those which occur on the basis of gender. The question, however, is how far do male and female workers have different material interests. Feminist perspectives which have influenced trade unions in recent years offer a variety of answers to this question. For the radical and revolutionary feminist view trade union unity is logically impossible since men are seen as not merely the agents but the cause of women's oppression. Patriarchy theorists too, who identify patriarchy as "the main enemy" advance an analysis which makes trade union unity difficult. For socialist feminists (Cockburn 1983, Hartmann 1979b) who identify a twofold struggle against capitalism and patriarchy, feminist participation in the trade unions is seen as worthwhile. Their belief, however, in the existence of two modes of production, (following the analysis of Delphy (1984)), capitalism and patriarchy, means that trade union unity is inevitably problematic. Recently some socialist feminists such as German (1989) have challenged the belief in the existence of two modes of production, arguing that the dominant mode of production is capitalist. This approach makes the question of trade union unity less problematic, because it does not

assert that male workers have any material interest in the continued oppression of women.

5.3 Gender and Occupational Inequalities

In this section I wish to refer back briefly to the material in Chapter 2.2.c and Chapter 4.2.a concerning occupational segregation by sex in employment and to discuss the implications of these previously outlined occupational inequalities for union office-holding. This relates to the question of how far is union participation the result of occupational rather than gender role.

Table 30: Shop Stewards Answering the Questionnaire by Occupational Status and Sex

	Male	Female	Total	
High Status	18 (90.0%)	2 (10.0%)	20 (100%)	
Middle Status	20 (68.9%)	9 (31.1%)	29 (100%)	
Low Status	3 (21.4%)	11 (78.6%)	14 (100%)	(N = 64)

These figures slightly under-represent the extent of gender inequality, since women tended to be concentrated in the lower end of each band. Among the low status stewards, three of the women and none of the men were on scale 1, the lowest pay scale. Among the middle status stewards none of the women, but ten of the men were on scale 6, the top scale within this category. The pattern of gender

inequality in occupational grade reflects the gender inequalities in local government employment (Rees 1990).

Table 31: Interviewees by Occupational Status

	Male	Female	Total	
High Status	7 (63.6%)	4 (36.4%)	11 (100%)	
Middle Status	4 (50.0%)	4 (50.0%)	8 (100%)	
Low Status	0 (0.0%)	3 (100%)	3 (100%)	(N = 22)

The higher occupational status of the interviewees than the informants answering the questionnaire may reflect the predominance of more senior local government officers in branch officer posts. Interviewees were selected with more attention to obtaining a gender balance than a balance of grades.

In the questionnaire study informants were asked a number of questions about their attitude to their job. Overall the replies demonstrated a high level of commitment to work. Some answers did indicate a gender difference, in terms of different replies from men and women. Proportionately more women (18%) than men (12%) agreed with the statement "My job is dull and repetitive, but it was only a minority for both sexes. More women (100%) than men (78%) agreed with the statement "I am capable of doing more responsible work than my job allows", suggesting that both sexes felt under-utilised at work, but women especially so. In response to the statement "My job

allows me to develop my abilities", 45% of women and 57% of men agreed. These replies suggest that women experienced a somewhat poorer quality of working life than men.

Also more women (77%) than men (62%) agreed with the statement that "My job is socially useful and worthwhile". This may reflect the greater employment of women in 'caring' jobs or it may be a perception of work arising from gender roles. Another gender difference occurred in response to a question about fear of unemployment. 33% of male informants and 18% of female informants agreed with the statement "I fear being unemployed in five years time." Again this could reflect the fact that male employees were objectively in more insecure jobs or knew more about risks of unemployment or it could reflect the masculine gender role as principal earner for the household.

On some other questions about attitudes to work there was no or minimal gender difference. Workers of both sexes found their jobs interesting and varied, believed that they had too much work to do and rejected a purely instrumental orientation to work. While these questions produced some interesting gender differences, which fit with the occupational patterns in the City Council, they also show substantial similarities between women and men in attitudes to work. In short the majority of shop stewards of both sexes demonstrated a commitment to work, which many writers on industrial relations (Chapter 2.2a) have identified as a motivator of union activism.

In Chapter 4 the impact of particular occupations on union activism has been discussed. In interview some informants identified jobs in which women worked which made union office-holding particularly difficult, such as school clerk, departmental secretary, nursery nurse. These occupational factors need to be kept in mind when discussing gender and union office-holding.

5.4 Gender and Union Office-holding

5.4.a Gender and Distribution of Shop Stewards

The questionnaire survey in 1987-89 was answered by 42 male and 22 female stewards. This gave a slight over-represention of the proportion of female stewards by comparison with the branch records for that time. Study of the annual shop stewards lists for the years 1983 to 1989 gave the following overall distribution of male and female stewards:-

Table 32: Annual Number of Male and Female Shop Stewards in the Sheffield NALGO Local Government Branch

	Male	Female	All
1983/4 Totals	106	49	155
	(68%)	(32)%	(100%)
1984/5 Totals	99	75	174
	(57%)	(43%)	(100%)
1985/6 Totals	100	65	165
	(61%)	(39%)	(100%)
1985/6 Totals (including external departments)			
	109	73	182
	(60%)	(40)%	(100%)
1986/7 Totals	118	69	187
	(63%)	(37%)	(100%)
1987/8 Totals	136	55	191
	(71%)	(29%)	(100%)
1988/9 Totals	104	35	139
	(75%)	(25%)	(100%)
1989/90 Totals	85	42	127
	(67%)	(33%)	(100%)

There are a number of possible reasons for this under-representation of women as shop stewards in proportion to their number among NALGO members, which was slightly over 50%. These include childcare, job status, shop steward recruitment processes and gender role.

From biographical data supplied by the shop stewards answering the questionnaire there was a noticeable absence of mothers, but not fathers, of young children among shop stewards. For women it appeared childcare responsibilities as well as paid work were difficult to combine with union office, but in interpreting this it is necessary to remember that many women with young children are out of employment altogether, and hence out of the trade union movement (Martin and Roberts 1984, Rees 1990).

Table 33: Presence of Children among Shop Stewards by Sex

	Yes	No	
Male	25 (60%)	17 (40%)	
Female	8 (36%)	14 (64%)	
Total	33 (52%)	31 (48%)	(N = 64)

Slightly over half of the shop stewards had children, with a majority of male stewards (60%) having children, while a majority (64%) of female stewards did not have children. This pattern fits with other research on female union office-holders reported in Chapter 2.2.b.

The gender differences were greater when the age of children was considered. None of the female stewards had a child under 5, whereas nine of the 42 male stewards did. Of the eight female stewards who had children in six cases all the children were over eighteen.

Table 34: Age of Youngest Child of Shop Stewards by Sex

	Male	Female	Total	
Under 5	9	0	9	
5-11	6	1	7	
11-14	2	0	2	
14-18	2	1	3	
over 18	5	6	11	
No children	18	14	32	
Total	42	22	64	(N = 64)

This table suggests that male stewards found it easier to combine parental responsibilities with union office-holding than female stewards did, reflecting an unequal division of labour within the home and the exclusion of many mothers of young children from employment.

The issue of childcare was commented on too by some interviewees as a factor which restricted union participation. For some members it prevented their becoming shop stewards. For some shop stewards it was seen as a factor which prevented their becoming branch officers, because of the number of evening meetings involved.

"Childcare is a critical issue for shop stewards, especially those with young children. There are problems of working late to do work and make up time."
(Female branch officer)

"Many shop stewards have no children or grown up children. There are creche arrangements at union meetings or the payment of babysitting expenses."
(Male branch organiser)

"If I think about it most women who are active in NALGO, most of them haven't got kids or have got grown up kids."
(Chief shop steward)

Do you think women have any particular difficulties being active in the union?
"Yes I think if they've got commitments at home, childcare problems, some of the meetings are after school time. It can be difficult for them to take an active part if they're a one-parent family and haven't got anyone to take care of the children."
(Female ex-shop steward)

How do you find being a parent and being a shop steward?
"Well I must admit I have tended not to go to as many evening meetings as I would have liked to have done. The executive's every fortnight on a Thursday, and I must confess the number of times I went to that were very limited, just because of the fact that I needed to get home, because my wife had been home all day. My going to evening meetings just wasn't fair on her. By five o'clock she was ready to go and have a rest."
(Male shop steward)

How do you cope being a single parent and a shop steward?
"It can be tricky sometimes, like last week when it was half-term holiday. I was off work, but the Joint Consultative Committee and the recognition issue was on, so I spent Monday basically running around town with two kiddies in tow. I don't see it as a particular problem. I've got that side fairly well sewn up. It can be

difficult sometimes when we're in negotiations. I might be late home, but that's more hitting me in the pocket than any problems with kids. I don't think that I could stand as a branch officer at the moment in the situation I'm in. When I was a branch officer I was negotiating until after midnight and I couldn't leave the kids with the childminder till after midnight, so it does limit me from that point of view. But on my role in the department it has no effect." (Male shop steward, ex-branch officer)

Your children are all grown up. Could you be a branch officer if you had young children?
"No, no, it would be impossible."
(Female branch officer)

Another factor mentioned by some interviewees to explain the under-representation of women as shop stewards was job status. This was often linked with confidence and the ability to control one's work situation to fit in union work.

Why do you think women are under-represented as shop stewards?
"Well men tend to be higher up, have more experience of meetings, sitting on committees and have more confidence. So more men get to be shop stewards. They're more confident."

As already discussed in Chapter 4.3.e, union facility agreements worked less well for stewards in lower status jobs because of the inflexibility of work. Given the concentration of women in these jobs this made union office holding difficult for many women workers. A female ex-shop steward described these job-related problems in relation to her work as a data preparation officer, a desk clerk in the Rates Hall and her current more senior administrative post.

"There was no flexibility in Data Prep. There were deadlines to be met. The work had to be done by a certain date. It couldn't be left. When I moved out of Data Prep I went to work on the cash counter. There was a majority of women there. I did feel guilty if I had to go to a meeting and the Rates Office was packed out, taking twenty minutes for people to get through the queue to pay their rates, and everyone was really busy, and I'd feel guilty about having to go to a meeting. You know one person's not going to make any difference but I still felt guilty.

The job I'm in now, if was a shop steward, I could do things like reschedule work. I know I've got a meeting next week and it's going to last all afternoon, so I'll have to work that bit harder the day before to make sure I get that work done or I can leave it till the next day and do it."
(Female ex-shop steward)

This account combines work-related factors and possibly aspects of the feminine gender role. It shows how inflexibility of work in low status jobs made it harder to take time off for union work, but also how the informant felt 'guilty' for leaving the job. Also she indicates her intention to cope with the meeting next week by making up the work she should do then either the day before or the day after. She does not suggest that she might cancel or defer it, a response which a number of male informants gave. In interviews it tended to be the women who talked about working late or taking work home to make up work missed because of union activity. It is possible this reflects more conscientiousness about work on the part of women or less assertiveness about their right to time off for union work. This point will be explored further in discussion of the operation of union facility agreements in part 4.d of this chapter.

A third factor identified from the research findings which may contribute towards explaining the under-representation of female shop stewards was the process of selection of shop stewards. In the questionnaire survey informants were asked a rank order question about how they became a shop steward in the first place. Some responses, such as being interested in trade unionism or being the only volunteer prepared to do the job, showed minimal gender

difference, but men appeared to be more likely than women to be asked to be shop stewards, as the follows table illustrates;-

Table 35: Shop Stewards Asked to Stand for Election by Work Colleagues by Sex

	Male	Female	Total	
First Ranking	13 (30.9%)	2 (9.1%)	15 (23.4%)	
Second Ranking	15 (35.7%)	5 (22.7%)	20 (31.3%)	
Third Ranking	6 (14.3%)	6 (27.3%)	12 (18.8%)	(N = 64)

(Percentages refer to total number of male or female shop stewards or all shop stewards in the third column.)

This suggests that there may be a gender difference in the path to union office-holding, which arises not from the attitudes of female shop stewards themselves, but from the attitudes of their work colleagues who may be less likely to look to women to take on leadership roles. Given that many shop stewards start off as reluctant representatives, who are initially pushed into union office-holding by others, this may be an important factor in explaining women's under-representation in union office-holding. This is especially the case in NALGO given that holding the office of shop steward was usually the key to more senior union office-holding.

Lastly explanations of women's under-representation were given which focused mainly on gender role attributes. These particularly focused on confidence and political awareness, although one can see their

links to low occupational status and lack of trade union skills and expertise.

One of the female shop stewards gave an account of the nursery nurses regarding campaign, which stressed the lack of confidence that women in low status jobs often experienced. The nursery nurses had been able to get organised with the help of a male service conditions officer, who recognised their difficulties and helped support their self-organisation.

"About fifteen years ago, a group of nursery nurses came along to say that we were under-paid and under-valued and we were told at that time that we had to get ourselves organised, but that was easier said than done. So we went away, but we didn't know which way to go forward. About four years ago we decided to take up the issue again. We had a very good service conditions officer, who said 'Yes you've got to get yourselves organised, but I'll help you get yourselves organised." It's different someone saying 'You go and do it.' without giving you any positive advice, but to actually be with you and say 'Right I'll show you how to do it' made the whole thing different. He gave us the positive image of saying 'You're the nursery nurses, you know what you're fighting for and when we go into meetings you put the point of view.' Although at the time I thought I could not do it, I went in and did it and it did prove to be the right way. It's having that confidence to go and face committee members and councillors and have that confidence to speak, which I think basically women don't have. They always tend to take a back seat and think somebody else can do it. I still do that at times. I'm aware that I do it and I try to overcome that and think no I must go forward and say something."

What is noticeable about this account is on the one hand the identification of the problem as a lack of confidence on the part of women, but also a clear ability to distinguish from experience between right and wrong ways for branch officers to organise members. Trade union organising is in many ways a learned skill. Whereas simply telling the nursery nurses to get on with getting themselves

organised had proved ineffective, where there had been an attempt to share union organising skills and empower women this had proved more successful.

Another informant from the Education Department, which was one of the departments with many women workers on low grades, discussed the problems of female union representation in the department in these terms:-

Are there mainly women workers in Education?

"Predominantly women, the service I work in is a totally female service and obviously all the women are in the lower paid sections of the Education Department."

Is it particularly difficult to organise that group and to get them to stand as shop stewards?

"Very difficult, because they're not politicised at all and for all sorts of reasons. Difficult to get women to stand as shop stewards and the reason women stand as shop stewards is invariably because they have had some sort of personal grievance and they come to trade unionism through dealing with that and eventually stand as a shop steward."
(Female branch officer, ex-chief shop steward)

This account identifies both the low status of the women workers and their non-politicised culture. Where women did stand as shop stewards this was often seen as the result of a particular issue or grievance. Sometimes when this issue had been resolved the motivation to stay as a shop steward declined, especially if there was pressure of work or pressure from work colleagues about taking time off for union work. During the interview stage of the research I met two female ex-shop stewards from other departments than Education who had also become shop stewards over specific issues and then resigned after a year or two.

In the Housing department at the time of the research the ratio of male to female stewards was three to one, although slightly over half of the membership in the department was female. One of the female shop stewards discussed this under-representation in the following terms:-

"It's something that exists right the way across the board and the first obvious reason is because of the way society works against women, because society is not equal. ... I'm not just talking about trade unions now, I'm talking about society in general, because sexism exists, because women's oppression exists. I think that that's why you always see fewer women coming forward."
(Female shop steward)

What is interesting about this answer is the way the problem is located at the level of society. It is also noteworthy that at the time of the research there was this under-representation of women in Housing, because Housing along with F&CS was one of the departments with more senior women local government officers. Housing and F&CS tended to be seen by the branch officers not only as activist departments, but as departments from which women shop stewards and branch officers were likely to come. In fact a majority (12, 55%) of female stewards answering the questionnaire came from the Education Department. Women's representation at the shop steward level is important because holding the office of shop steward in NALGO is often, at least at the start of a union career, the usual first stage for further union office-holding. In the questionnaire survey questions were asked about participation in a number of branch and departmental committees. 12 (54.5%) women and 15 (35.7%) men held posts of responsibility on the departmental shop stewards' committee.

Among these posts were five male and five female chief shop stewards. The annual shop stewards lists for 1983-89 indicated 26 male and 13 female chief shop stewards during this period, which was proportionate to the number of male and female shop stewards in the branch. Other posts of responsibility on the departmental shop stewards committee included chair, secretary and minutes secretary.

What these figures suggest is that once women became shop stewards they did not seem to encounter any particular barriers or discrimination in taking on posts on the departmental shop stewards committee. This may indicate that when researching women's levels of participation and representation in unions, it is important to be specific about the particular level of the union structure under discussion, since different barriers may be present or absent at different levels.

Given the presence of possibly around 200 stewards in the branch not all stewards were necessarily members of the branch committee, although this practice varied from department to department, as did levels of attendance at the branch committee. Departmental variations in participation in the branch committee will be explored in the Chapter 7. 9 (40.9%) female and 22 (52.4%) male stewards were members of the branch committee. This represents a degree of female under-representation at this level, which may be partly related to the timing of meetings, which was in the evening. In interview, however, some informants did indicate that shop stewards from their

department did not go to the branch committee much because they did not find it a useful union structure. So there are departmental as well as gender role factors involved here.

So women were under-represented as shop stewards and as members of the branch committee. Within the ranks of shop stewards they were not under-represented as chief shop stewards or in other posts on departmental shop stewards committees. Once women were members of the branch committee they did not appear to be under-represented in office-holding on the branch committee. Of the 9 female stewards who were members of the branch committee 8 held some post or posts on it. For male stewards the corresponding figures were 22 on the branch committee and 16 of these 22 holding posts on the branch committee.

One of the important divisions in trade union experience, which was noticeable in interviews, was between those shop stewards whose understanding and knowledge of the union had essentially stayed at the departmental level and those who were also aware of branch level debate and issues. For some shop stewards, who only held office for a short time, and maybe had taken office because of specific departmental problems, the department, not the branch or any regional or national structures, had been their source of knowledge about NALGO matters. Other shop stewards in interview, however, were well able to comment on levels of NALGO organisation in other departments and on current debates in the branch, as well as having some views of NALGO's national policies. This issue of knowledge of the union

beyond the immediate departmental level is important if women are to achieve proportionate representation at all levels of the union. To develop a union 'career' requires knowledge of the union structures and procedures for standing for election.

5.4.b Gender and Attitudes to Being a Shop Steward

In the questionnaire survey informants were asked a number of attitudinal questions about the role of the shop steward, including definition of a good shop steward, and the good and bad things about being a shop steward. These replies were crosstabulated by sex to examine whether there was any relationship between gender and attitudes towards being a shop steward.

The question about views of what makes a good shop steward produced some gender differences, although given the small number of responses to some answers their significance should not be over-stated. 10 women (45.5%) and 10 men (23.8%) ranked as first choice "A good shop steward is someone who keeps their members well-informed." This suggests that women valued the information passing role more than men. This may be because women obtained less information than men via their jobs about what was happening in terms of Council employment policy etc. or may be it was an aspect of the shop steward role that women felt particularly competent and happy with. The comments later in this section by the (female) branch organiser about

women stewards often being good organisers and administrators would fit in with this. Moreover it is possible that more women than men in Council employment had jobs which involved passing on routine information.

The statement "A good shop steward is someone who provides a lead to members" was not a popular response for either sex. Aiding membership participation was ranked slightly more highly by women than men with 18.2% of women and 14.3% of men placing this first. Being a good departmental representative was ranked first proportionately by more men (28.6%) than women (4.5%) although an equal number of men and women ranked it second. On the other hand being good at sorting out grievances of members was ranked first by 22.7% of women and 14.3% of men. Maybe women were focusing here more on individual issues facing members rather than collective departmental issues.

A write-in question, where informants were invited to identify other characteristics of a good shop steward produced a three-way split among the 35 informants who answered it. Twelve (4 women and 8 men) emphasised moral and personal qualities, eight (1 woman and 7 men) mentioned political awareness, and fifteen (8 women and 7 men) referred to competence and effectiveness in performing union work. These responses suggest that the women who answered the question tended to reject the more politicised view of the shop steward role in favour of the competent representative role. This may reflect the

fact that many women worked in jobs which did not offer the opportunity to perform any leadership roles.

Informants were also asked about the good and bad things about being a shop steward and these replies were crosstabulated by sex. There appeared to be no gender difference in getting more information about NALGO, but this was not rated highly by either sex. Finding trade union work interesting was rated slightly more highly by women than men, with 27.3% of women and 9.5% of men ranking this first. It was ranked second by 22.7% of women and 28.6% of men. This corresponds with responses to the question about reasons for becoming a shop steward in the first place. These female shop stewards do not fit the traditional stereotype of women workers as uninterested in trade unionism.

The statement "It makes me feel more confident" was not supported strongly by either sex, which is not surprising giving the difficult climate of the 1980s for trade unions. Proportionately more women, however, than men did rank it highly, with 4.5% of women and 2.4% of men putting it first and 13.6% of women 7.4% of men putting it second. Trade union activism was not, however, a significant empowering experience for either sex. The issue of how trade unions can empower women workers and of ways in which union activism is an empowering experience for women is important in terms of unions' women's rights policies. This has been discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2b) and will be returned to in section 4.i of this chapter.

Sorting out members' problems was rated more highly by men than women as one of the positive aspects of being a shop steward. 23.8% of men and 4.7% of women ranked this first, with 24.3% of men and 9.5% of women ranking this second. Maybe men's higher occupational status made it easier for them to do this successfully. Being successful in negotiations was rated first by 9.1% of women and 7.1% of men, with 27.3% of women and 14.3% of men ranking it second, so this aspect of being a shop steward was valued slightly more by women than men.

The statement "I have learned a lot from being a shop steward" was ranked first by 7 (31.8%) women and 11 (26.2%) men, indicating that it was valued by a substantial proportion of each sex, but rather more so by women than men. This could reflect occupational status, i.e. higher status males already had other sources of information, or gender role, in that women admit more readily than men to have learned things.

Questions about the bad things about being a shop steward also produced some gender differences. The statement "It creates difficulties in doing one's job" was ranked more highly by men than women.

Table 36: Union Work and Job Conflicts by Sex

	First Ranking	Second Ranking	Third Ranking	
Male stewards	16 (38.1%)	9 (21.4%)	7 (16.6%)	
Female stewards	2 (9.1%)	4 (18.2%)	8 (36.4%)	
Total	18 (28.1%)	13 (20.3%)	15 (23.4%)	(N = 64)

This may reflect the fact that men had more senior jobs with more open-ended responsibilities. Because these jobs were more senior they were often more flexible, enabling the shop steward to do more union work in work time. Questions about the operation of union facility time, discussed in section 4d of this chapter suggest that trade union work created less difficulties for women than men in doing their job, because women did more union work in their own time.

The other statement which produced an interesting degree of gender difference was in response to the statement "The responsibility can be worrying". This was rated more highly by women than men. 22.7% of women and 9.5% of men put this first and 27.3% of women and 4.8% of men put this second. This may reflect that women do worry more than men or they find it easier than men to admit that they worry. This point is discussed in the interview extract from the (female) branch organiser below. If women do worry more than men, this may reflect greater conscientiousness, but this can be a factor which holds women back in union activity, if it makes women reluctant to take on more senior union responsibilities.

In the interviews with branch officers and shop stewards some qualitative material on gender roles in relation to union office-holding was obtained. Some of this will be discussed later in this chapter and Chapter 6. Material reproduced here deals with gender differences in performance of the shop steward role.

One female branch organiser discussed the problems for women of performing the shop steward role in the following terms:-

"It's I think partly the nature of women to be more self critical. I can only say that I am, whereas some of my colleagues who are men will not agonise so much over whether they are doing something well, they just do the best they can, and I don't mean that they don't think about it, whereas I will spend hours agonising over something. Maybe men do still agonise in the same way, but probably for reasons to do with upbringing and everything else, they don't show it in that way. Whereas women, as a result of their being brought up not to be decision makers, I mean that's the critical bit, not to be people of action, I don't think women have traditionally been people of action, they've been brought up into a more passive role. Therefore when they're put into an action situation, in a decision-making situation, it is for women more difficult, not impossible, just more difficult.

This self-critical quality, while it could help women to do union work better than men, could also act as a barrier to taking union office in the first place, or encourage female shop stewards to step down. What is interesting, however, about the analysis of gender roles is that it is not easy to decide whether men are equally uncertain about particular decisions, since the gender role difference may lie in concealing anxiety rather than not experiencing it. She also felt that women's socialisation could affect performance in particular aspects of the shop steward role, namely meetings, although in administration and organisation she had generally found women to be at least as competent as men.

"I think that the issues that women find more difficult to deal with are not dealing with individuals, but dealing with meetings. Pressure gets put on you at meetings, whether union meetings or negotiating meetings. Because in their jobs women haven't necessarily had experience of that, and the union work puts you into the position where you meet across the table with your chief officer,

but you meet as an equal when you're a shop steward, and that is a role I thing women find more difficult to move into than men."

This statement indicates well the inter-relation of gender role and occupational status in affecting women's union work.

5.4.c Gender and Experience of Industrial Action

In the questionnaire survey informants were asked about their experiences of industrial action. At the time of the survey, which was before the national NALGO strikes of 1989, 18 (81.8%) of female stewards and 35 (83.3%) of male stewards had taken part in some form of industrial action. Table 37 gives the numbers and percentages of stewards taking part in a variety of forms of industrial action.

The largest gender differences here related either to strike action or the ban on talking to councillors. Much of the variation in levels of strike action can be explained in terms of departmental factors (see Chapter 7.4.d), since much strike action occurred at departmental rather than branch level. Involvement in the ban on talking to councillors was related to job status, since higher status jobs were more likely to involve servicing Council committees and dealing with queries from councillors (see Chapter 4.3.d). Thus these figures do not indicate any particular gender role difference in willingness to take industrial action.

In the interviews some comments were made on women's experiences of industrial action. These did not indicate any lack of preparedness on the part of women to take part in industrial action. They did, however, indicate ways in which women's gender role could be used against them when taking industrial action. For instance during the

Table 37: Experience of Industrial Action by Sex

	Male	Female	Total
Overtime ban	10 (23.8%)	8 (36.4%)	18 (28.1%)
Work to rule	8 (19.0%)	7 (31.8%)	15 (23.4%)
No cover of vacant posts	26 (61.9%)	10 (45.5%)	36 (56.3%)
Ban on use of telephones	9 (21.4%)	3 (13.6%)	12 (18.8%)
Refusal to take on new duties	14 (33.3%)	9 (40.1%)	23 (35.9%)
Ban on talking to councillors	12 (19.4%)	1 (4.5%)	13 (20.3%)
Ban on use of cars for work purposes	6 (14.3%)	3 (13.6%)	9 (14.1%)
Half-day strike	23 (54.8%)	9 (40.9%)	32 (50.0%)
One day strike	28 (66.7%)	11 (50.0%)	39 (60.9%)
Strike lasting under 1 week	4 (9.5%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (6.3%)
Strike lasting 1 week - 1 month	1 (2.4%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.6%)
Strike lasting 1 month - 3 months	4 (9.5%)	3 (13.6%)	7 (10.9%)
Strike lasting over 3 months	2 (4.8%)	1 (4.5%)	3 (4.7%)

(N = 64)

nursery nurses regrading campaign one of the leading shop stewards in the campaign explained how industrial action by women in a caring job was often perceived critically.

"At nearly every meeting we went to out of Sheffield we were always put under pressure by people who turned round and said to us, more or less, 'You are women and you are taking industrial action against children and families.' They played on it several times to say we were women and we shouldn't be taking industrial action against parents and children and made us feel bad."

What is being raised here is a conflict between a traditional feminine gender role, caring for children, and the rights of workers to take industrial action. The statement shows the inner conflicts this produced for the union activists. On the one hand they felt they were being unfairly guilt-tripped, but on another level they still felt hurt by these criticisms. The need to withstand these pressures to take industrial action is a factor which affects some women workers and some workers in particular 'caring' occupations. It is entirely possible, for instance, that a male residential social worker might feel similar conflicts about taking industrial action. I did not, however, encounter any male interviewees who talked about feeling guilty whether about taking time off for union work, taking industrial action or any other aspect of their working or personal lives.

Another shop steward, who had been involved in the new technology dispute, referred to the lack of sympathy for lower grade female staff when taking industrial action, from male union colleagues, many of whom were in managerial positions (see also Chapter 2.3.e).

"There were staff in the Treasury who didn't believe we should be out on strike. ... In the Treasury men tend to be in higher profile jobs, higher graded jobs, and the women tend to be in the lower graded jobs. The new technology comes into the job more when you are on the lower graded job, so the managers, who are mostly males, couldn't understand what all the fuss was about."
(Female ex-shop steward)

This statement illustrates how both gender and occupational inequalities tended to undermine union solidarity when low graded women workers were taking industrial action over issues of specific concern to them. On the other hand the national NALGO strike of 1989 in defence of national pay rates and national bargaining had been a unifying dispute, in which women had played an active role. This experience had been empowering for many women involved. As one of the female shop stewards stated:-

"On the picket lines [in the 1989 national strike] the best picket organisers were women in this department"
(Female shop steward in Housing)

5.4.d Gender and Operation of Union Facility Agreements

The practical difficulties of the operation of the trade union facilities agreement have already been indicated in Chapter 4.3.e, namely that while stewards were entitled to leave their jobs to do union work, there was usually no cover for the work they left. For some jobs cover was essential to allow stewards to leave the job to do union work. One of the nursery nurse shop stewards described the particular problems of her job as follows:-

Is it difficult being a shop steward doing a job like a nursery nurse?
"Yes, it's extremely difficult, because you can't actually have time off work without cover, that's where the cost is. We did come to an agreement with the Education Department for cover. It is difficult because you are not dealing with paperwork, you're dealing with young children. Nursery nurses work in a team situation with a teacher and another nursery nurse and I couldn't leave them without cover because (a) the children weren't in a safe environment and (b) it puts extra pressure on the staff you leave, which you really don't want to do.

What you need is continuity for the children as well. It's no good having different people in to cover every day or every week, because children need to see the same face and you have a routine in the nursery and it takes time for someone to get into that routine and to know the children. If you don't get someone who is familiar to them it puts extra work on the nursery staff who remain."
(Nursery nurse shop steward)

This shop steward was able to sort out her cover problems because she had a regular person, who wanted part-time work, who was employed to cover for her. She stressed that she also worked with an understanding head teacher and staff. A number of women interviewees stressed the importance of supportive work colleagues. This account indicates the need in some jobs not only for cover to do union work, but for a type of cover which is appropriate to the job and allows the post-holder to leave the job without being concerned that the work is not being done properly in her absence. In a way the situation of the nursery nurse shop steward needing good quality cover for her work is similar to working parents needing good quality childcare, so they can go to work without worrying about the children.

In the interview schedule informants were asked a number of questions about the operation of union facility agreements and the relation between job and union work.

Table 38: Time Spent on NALGO Work by Sex
Approximately how many hours a week do you spend on NALGO work? (including time attending meetings) by sex

	Male	Female	Total
0-5 hours	14 (33.3%)	6 (27.3%)	20 (31.3%)
6-10 hours	14 (33.3%)	10 (45.5%)	24 (37.5%)
11-15 hours	5 (11.9%)	2 (9.1%)	7 (10.9%)
16-20 hours	5 (11.9%)	2 (9.1%)	7 (10.9%)
over 20 hours	2 (4.8%)	2 (9.1%)	4 (6.3%)
missing	2 (4.8%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (3.1%)

(N = 64)

The table of time spent on union work does not indicate any major gender difference in the amount of time spent on union work. There were, however, substantial gender differences in the time when this union work was done, as Table 39 shows.

Table: 39 Times when Union Work Performed by Sex

	Male	Female	Total
Mostly in work time	25 (59.5%)	7 (31.8%)	32 (50%)
About half in work time and half in own time	15 (35.7%)	12 (54.5%)	27 (42.2%)
Mostly in own time	2 (4.8%)	3 (13.6%)	5 (7.8%)

(N = 64)

This shows that union facility agreements were working less well for female shop stewards than for male shop stewards. This is partly a matter of job status (see Table 22, page 172).

In the questionnaire survey informants were asked whether they had any problems taking time off for union work and whether their job assisted their union work and whether it conflicted in any way with it. By looking at the answers to these questions broken down by gender, we can explore more fully the reasons why women did more of their union work in their own time than men did.

Slightly more women than men reported that they did have difficulties in taking time off for union work, as Table 40 shows.

Table 40: Difficulties in Taking Time Off for Union Work by Sex
Do you encounter any difficulties in taking the time off work for union duties which you are formally allowed to take?

	Male	Female	Total
YES	12 (28.6%)	9 (40.9%)	21 (32.8%)
NO	28 (66.7%)	13 (59.1%)	41 (64.1%)
DON'T KNOW	2 (4.8%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (3.2%)

(N = 64)

(Percentages refer to total number of male and female stewards.)

Even though many informants stated that they had no difficulty taking time off for union work, some did gave later questionnaire responses which indicated some sources of difficulty. There is a noticeable

gender difference (Table 41) in response to 'pressure from managers'. For female stewards this came first as often as other factors, such as workload pressure. It was clearly more of a problem for female than male stewards, reflecting job status and perhaps attitudes of managers to union activity on the part of women workers.

Table 41: Sources of Difficulty in Taking Time Off for Union Work by Sex
If yes, which is the source of most difficulty? Please rank

Male Shop Stewards

	First Ranking	Second Ranking	Third Ranking
Pressure from managers	4 (9.5%)	2 (4.7%)	1 (2.4%)
Pressure from colleagues	1 (2.4%)	4 (9.5%0	1 (2.4%)
Pressure from service users	4 (9.5%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.4%)
Other factors (usually workload)	8 (19.0%)	1 (2.4%)	2 (4.7%)

(N = 42)

Female Shop Stewards

	First Ranking	Second Ranking	Third Ranking
Pressure from managers	5 (22.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Pressure from colleagues	0 (0.0%)	2 (9.1%)	3 (13.6%)
Pressure from service users	1 (4.5%)	3 (13.6%)	1 (4.5%)
Other factors (usually workload)	5 (22.7%)	1 (5.4%)	0 (0.0%)

(N = 22)

(Percentages refer to total number of male and female stewards.)

Table 42: Job Support for Union Work by Sex
Does your job help you to be effective as a shop steward?

	YES	NO
Male Shop Stewards		
by giving access to useful information	26 (61.9%)	16 (38.1%)
by allowing easy access to your members	37 (88.1%)	4 (9.5%)
giving you flexibility in organising your time and work	36 (85.7%)	4 (9.5%)
helping you develop skills useful in union work (e.g. public speaking, organising meetings)	22 (52.4%)	19 (45.2%)
giving access to senior management	27 (64.3%)	15 (35.7%)
		(N = 42)
Female Shop Stewards		
by giving access to useful information	13 (59.1%)	7 (31.8%)
by allowing easy access to your members	13 (59.1%)	8 (36.4%)
giving you flexibility in organising your time and work	15 (68.2%)	7 (31.8%)
helping you develop skills useful in union work (e.g. public speaking, organising meetings)	11 (50.0%)	10 (45.5%)
giving access to senior management	9 (40.9%)	12 (54.5%)
		(N = 22)

(Percentages refer to total number of male and female stewards.)

These tables show minimal gender difference in access to information and acquisition of skills which are useful union work. The other three categories, access to members, job flexibility and access to senior management, show greater differences between men's and women's

work situation. In all three cases men's jobs were providing greater assistance to the performance of union work than women's.

Table 43: Job Conflicts with Union Work by Sex
Does your job conflict in any way with your work as a shop steward?

	YES	NO
Male Shop Stewards		
conflict of time demands	35 (83.3%)	7 (16.7%)
threat to promotion prospects	25 (59.5%)	13 (31.0%)
problem of building up a backlog of work	26 (61.9%)	15 (35.7%)
inflexibility of work	4 (9.5%)	38 (90.5%)
conflict of responsibilities/loyalties (wearing two hats)	19 (45.2%)	23 (54.8%)
		(N = 42)
Female Shop Stewards		
conflict of time demands	15 (68.2%)	6 (27.3%)
threat to promotion prospects	11 (50.0%)	8 (36.4%)
problem of building up a backlog of work	14 (63.6%)	8 (36.4%)
inflexibility of work	3 (13.6%0	18 (81.8%)
conflict of responsibilities/loyalties (wearing two hats)	10 (45.5%0	12 (54.5%)
		(N = 22)

The one noticeable gender difference in Table 43 was that men felt conflict of time demands more than women, (83.3% compared to 68.2%), although it was strongly identified as a problem by both sexes. The fact that men experienced this to a greater degree than women may be

related to the fact that men made greater use of union facility agreements and did less union work in their own time.

Interviews provided further material about the problems of taking time off for union work. This allowed some exploration of gender differences in attitudes towards work and union facility time. Some shop stewards clearly found it easier to be assertive about their rights to time off for union work. This relates to occupational status, departmental culture and gender role. Where a gender difference could be discerned it appeared that in some ways women were more work orientated than men, in that they were less willing to let job performance be affected by union work.

One male branch officer described how as a shop steward he had been able to adjust his workload to fit in the union work:

"When I first started as a shop steward, one of the things that a careers officer was supposed to do was to read various bits of literature and so on about new jobs etc., so that was the first thing that went, but obviously that isn't noticeable, whereas if I was on the reception desk, then it's a lot more difficult to say 'Well I'm going off for two hours and leaving nobody on the reception desk.'" (Male branch officer)

Many male interviewees who were aware that job status and job flexibility enabled them to fit union work into work time recognised and identified the contrast between their situation and that of other workers. Another male steward described his work situation as a computer adviser as follows:-

"I have got such a flexible job that I don't have any trouble at all. If something's rescheduled then something gets put back another week

and we lose a week. The work piles up on my desk, but it just gets rescheduled. Timescales of projects can be shoved back as a result of the work that I do for the union. It's a bit more difficult for a departmental secretary or a clerk-typist in the typing pool, where everybody gets a big pile of work and she's still got a bit left, then they're going to increase the amount they throw on top of that. She's bound to be under pressure to keep the same sort of productivity as everyone else. There was a steward at one time who actually worked hard until quarter past five to make up the time when she was off as a shop steward so that her work didn't fall behind, which I suppose someone feels they have to do, but I'm not very happy about it."
(Male chief shop steward, ex-branch officer)

As these extracts indicate for mostly women in clerical, secretarial and reception jobs obtaining time off for union work was very difficult unless cover was available. Many interviewees commented on the necessity of cover and attempts by the branch to negotiate it, but they recognised the difficulty of achieving this. In some professional jobs too it was difficult or impossible at times to use the union facility agreement. This is illustrated in the following account from a female ex-shop steward in F&CS.

"There was no problem about getting time off to go to meetings. No one said 'You can't go.', but getting the job covered was difficult. I was working in a small unit which had to be covered at all times, working with mentally handicapped people. So sometimes I just couldn't leave the job. It wouldn't be fair on the other workers or the people we were looking after in the unit. Sometimes it's just not possible to leave."

So did you feel a conflict between doing your job and union work?
Yes at times I did. It's important to represent people and generally people appreciate what you're doing, but you're still missing from the unit. I decided not to stand again as a shop steward partly because I had sorted out the problem which was the initial reason for standing, and partly because I wanted to concentrate my energies on work more. I felt unhappy that I was not doing my job as well as I could because of the amount of time necessary for the union work. And when you're looking after vulnerable clients who need support you want to put your time into doing the job properly."
(Female ex-shop steward, F&CS)

The following interview indicates also the differences in the position of different grades of women workers in respect of operating the union facilities agreement.

"Whereas in my own case because I was in a managerial position I was able to sort out my own workload and when I did my work, so I was able to do trades union duties and when I became chief shop steward I was then seconded for three days. I had three days that I could use for trade union duties and somebody was put in to cover my job. (Female branch officer)

5.4.e Gender and Shop Steward Turnover

The relation of trade union facility agreements to shop steward turnover has been discussed earlier in Chapter 4. It is reasonable to suppose that shop stewards who can do a substantial amount of union work in work time are more likely to stand again for election, and to stay in office over a number of years, than those who feel obliged to do much union work in their own time.

An analysis of the annual shop stewards list showed that averaged across departments there was no gender difference in the rate of shop steward turnover. The average number of years for length of service as a shop steward for both sexes was two years. The figures showed that the great majority of shop stewards only serve for one or two years, while only a minority serve for several years and so are more likely to accumulate the union expertise which enables them to take on branch office and regional and national union positions.

In interviews I endeavoured to find out whether informants thought male and female shop stewards stood down for different reasons. A great variety of reasons were offered for shop steward turnover; these included workloads, promotion or job change, ability to find a replacement as shop steward, activism related to a single issue which subsided when that issue was resolved, childcare responsibilities, and the pressures of union work. There was no conclusive evidence that men and women resigned for different reasons, although it is possible that more female stewards stood down because of pressures of work and difficulties of getting time off, while more men were promoted out of union work.

5.4.f Management Harassment of Female Union Officers and Stewards

In two of the in-depth interviews with female union activists, one of whom was a branch officer and ex-chief shop steward and the other of whom was ex-branch president, the issue of management harassment of female union activists was raised by the interviewee. What was described was a form of sexist harassment, in which women union activists encountered employment discrimination and a hostile reception from the managers they had to negotiate with. Both informants referred to an organisational culture in which trade union activity was seen as 'unfeminine' and not suitable for women. One spoke of 'institutionalised sexism'. They both noted that behaviour which was seen as assertiveness on the part of men was viewed as aggression when engaged in by women. Thus they felt men tended to get promoted as a result of trade union activism, while women were denied promotion as a result of it, and that this discouraged other women from taking on union office.

These were both informants with substantial experience in the branch. What they identify is a serious problem for trade unions seeking to increase participation of women members. It is not always easy for unions to protect activists against discrimination by management. Where this discrimination takes the form of sex discrimination as well, it is also potentially divisive of the membership.

"I think women are discriminated against when they are shop stewards, because it is not seen as a feminine activity, if you are assertive you are seen as being aggressive whereas for men that's seen as being

forceful and not aggressive, and men shop stewards, I'm speaking from experience here, men tend to be promoted whereas women don't. I was chief shop steward for three years, a job I thoroughly enjoyed doing, but I also feel that I have been discriminated against because I was chief shop steward and that it's held me back.
I think that women are viewed, in fact I know that some women are viewed, who are assertive when they are trade union officers, as aggressive. I don't see myself that way and I don't think my members see me that way, but unfortunately when you are negotiating with men and you say 'This is the corporate policy, this is what will be followed', then that's how you're viewed."

So does this discourage other women?
"Yes I think so, yes they don't see other women being promoted, they have to pick something up from that."
(Female branch officer and ex-chief shop steward)

The other interviewee linked the issue of management discrimination against female union activists to the Council's equal opportunities code and also identified a very different treatment of male and female union activists.

"The women who were shop stewards actually got stamped on almost openly. I'm aware of many women who feel they've been denied promotion because of their trade union activity, whereas men have got promotion almost because of their trade union activity. I know of three women who have taken out grievances that they have been discriminated against because of their union activity. I know of one man and he got promoted, the three women didn't. There is an issue there with the Council about how it implements its commitment not to discriminate against people on the grounds of trade union activity [part of the Council's equal opportunities code of practice]. They actually treat men and women differently in the way that they discriminate or the way they view trade union activity. Men are more likely to be promoted, women are more likely to be pushed down."
(Female shop steward, ex-branch president)

She also indicated that even if the union members were free of gender stereotypes, these were still held by the managers whom union representatives had to negotiate with and this constituted a problem for female union office-holders.

"If you're a woman you're not assertive, you're aggressive. I think it is an issue about it not being a feminine thing to do." (Female shop steward, ex-branch president)

5.4.g Union Activism and Maintaining a Personal Life

Stress at work is increasingly recognised as a social problem. For union activists the stresses of work can be compounded by the stresses of union work. Stresses related to union activity have been addressed in some trade union courses (Labour Research Department 1988a). Some of these courses have included personal coping strategies, such as co-counselling and assertiveness training. The Labour Research Department quotes the NUPE Northern Divisional Education Officer as saying the courses on stress for trade unionists:-

"manage to link personal issues and personal problems with collective bargaining and other negotiating issues." (p.17)

This linkage of the personal and the collective issues is important for unions in helping to sustain long-term activism. As already indicated in the sections on shop steward turnover, many shop stewards stayed in office for only one or two years. While this was often related to work pressures, other aspects of personal life may also have been relevant. One obvious aspect is childcare responsibilities. The questionnaire stage of the research indicated the virtual absence of women with young children as union office-holders. Some men tended to reduce their levels of union activity

when they became fathers. One male branch officer stopped being an officer for a year after the birth of twins. Another male shop steward decided to resign as a steward when he and his wife arranged to job-share following the birth of their second child.

The operation of the union facilities agreement also needs to be considered. The more shop stewards were obliged to use their own time for union duties, the less free time they had for social and personal life. One male shop steward, who had been a shop steward for six years at the time of the survey, described how because of changes in his job he was now able to do more union work in work time.

"I noticed one of the questions on the form was about the amount of work you do at home compared to the amount of work you do in your own time and for me that's changed. When I started being a steward I used to do a lot of work at home, because I could do writing letters, word-processing, writing documents etc., more easily at home because of access to a printer. But as the years have gone by I've found more opportunity to do that sort of thing at work. I do (union) work on data bases and word-processing at work and so I tend to spend hardly any time on union work outside work hours, apart from the union meetings in the evenings.
Has that made it easier to continue as a shop steward?
"I think so."
(Male shop steward)

Much material emerged in interviews from both male and female shop stewards, and even more so the branch officers, about the personal costs and stresses of union activism. Interviewees stressed the necessity of being single or having very supportive partners and having no children or grown up children. Also the branch officers were a tight-knit group who provided moral support for each other's union activism. The following interview extracts illustrate this:-

"A lot of people in senior positions in the branch, although not all, are often people who are divorced, separated or have got very understanding partners or who can't stand the sight of their partners, rather than people who have so called normal relationships. In my opinion that runs through the hierarchy of lay officials at district and national level, so it's much more difficult for a so-called normal married relationship to be able to function."
(Male branch officer)

"How does it [union activism] affect my personal life? Well I think it's bad news basically ... because if something needs doing for the union than personal lives inevitably end up taking the brunt of that. You end up not doing personal life type things; you have to do union things at the weekend and in the evenings, and that is not a good thing."
(Male chief shop steward)

"Unfortunately most of the activists in the branch tend to be divorced, separated. I don't know if this is where trade unionism leads you. But that's how it appears to be. It really does almost take over your life, because it doesn't just involve the work here in the branch, I mean you have to go to meetings, there's meetings at district, in London, which I went to on Friday, there's district council which meets on a Saturday, there's Annual Conference which is a week away and so on."
(Female branch officer)

Informants remarked that it was not only the time demands of union work that they found stressful and restrictive of personal life, but also the tendency to take union work home with them mentally. This occurred particularly if they were dealing with difficult casework, like final stage disciplinaries, or were handling major issues in negotiations. Indeed one shop steward commented that it was just like jobs such as teaching and social work in that it was not possible to switch off mentally from the job when one went home.

"You tend to take it home with you a lot of the time, while it may not be work that you take home, it's all in your head and it's going round your head while you're at home".
(Female branch officer)

Another informant observed that the problems of the stresses of union work increased the longer someone held union office:-

"The longer you're active in the union, the more experienced people expect you to be. It's an ever-growing circle. The longer you do it, the more demand there's going to be for you to do more."
(Female shop steward)

In comments about ways of coping with the stress of union work informants talked about both the need at times for solitude and also the importance of socialising with other activists.

"I do need a lot of time on my own, to recover from the stresses, otherwise you just start suffering from burn-out and you don't want to pick anything up and you start getting sloppy."
(Female branch officer)

The present group of branch officers have been branch officers together for the last year and so it is a close group, so we tend to socialise as well together so it's very much union, union, union. I personally think I couldn't do this job without that sort of support from the other branch officers."
(Female branch officer)

"Socially the people I mix with are people who would support trade union activity."
(Female shop steward)

While much of the interview material indicated the stresses of union work, and interviewees did at times refer to union work as a 'thankless task', this should not be taken to imply that activists gained no personal and psychological benefits from activism. Some activists did hold union office for a number of years. This cannot be explained only in terms of inability to find a replacement as shop steward or pressure from colleagues to continue in office. The main reasons for continuing in office on a long-term basis seemed to be

either that people enjoyed union work on balance or that they had some political consciousness which made union work relevant and important to them. As one long-standing shop steward put it:-

"Because I am a political activist then my trade union will always be the natural starting point for my political activism."
(Male shop steward)

5.4.h Women at Branch Officer Level

One of the issues about the stresses of union work which was discussed in interviews was whether they were different for men and women or not. On the one hand shop stewards and union officers of both sexes recognised that the responsibility of union work could be worrying, particularly when dealing with casework where members' jobs were at stake. Pressures on personal time too were identified as a problem for both sexes. On the other hand there was a recognition that if women were in traditional relationships with men there might be less tolerance of their union activism by their partners than their male colleagues might receive from their partners. As one male branch officer acknowledged:-

"Pressures of union work can affect men and women equally. If a woman decides to become active she can be placed under the same pressures that the man who decides to become active is. But as a generalisation I think it's probably true to say that there are more men who are active at senior levels than women. A woman might find it more difficult than a man to take on the role of union officer. In certain relationships there's still that kind of traditional role that a woman should do more round the house and so on which allows the male to get away with spending more time in the union at higher level, whereas a woman who becomes involved at higher level, if she's

married or living with a more traditional partner, might find herself under more pressure than the average man. So in certain situations it affects people equally, in other situations it can affect women disproportionately."
(Male branch officer)

In fact none of the female branch officers interviewed appeared to be in a 'traditional' relationship. Indeed one of the female branch officers, when speaking about the importance of personal space and the need for solitude at times, recognised that her situation was in some ways different from that of many people and was fortunate in allowing her to be alone. She stated:-

"I'm fortunate that I can go home and be on my own, when lots of people can't."
(Female branch officer)

This is not the conventional social view of women living alone, but may be one which is appropriate to many women who hold responsible positions in work and other organisations.

There was also a degree of support for each other among the women branch officers, although being supportive was not confined to one sex.

"There are three women officers in the branch now. We do act as support for each other, but having said that there are male branch officers who are equally supportive."
(Female branch officer)

Among the male branch officers who was identifed as supportive of women branch officers was the male International Relations Officer, who was the one black officer in the branch.

In one case one of the female shop stewards, who had been a branch officer, was living with one of the male branch officers. This presented her, although not it appeared him, with the problem of maintaining a separate identity within the branch. She had to work hard to establish respect for herself as an activist in her own right.

"I don't know whether you know that the executive officer and I live together. When I stood as branch president I actually made a statement that I'd been in NALGO longer than he has. If I'm going to make mistakes at least give me credit for making my own mistakes and not for making his mistakes for him. Give me the credit for having a brain of my own. I can actually work out where I stand on things without just assuming that I'm parrotting off what he thinks. I think people see him as the person who influences me and not the other way round. Nobody thinks that I influence him. I think I do and he thinks I do."

In Chapter 2.2.b the existing research on women union leaders at local and national level was discussed. As already mentioned most women who had reached this level of union office did not have childcare responsibilities and many of them were single. These personal characteristics tended to be similar for the women officers interviewed in my research. In total six senior women activists were interviewed. These were the branch organiser (a NALGO employee), and five branch officers or ex-officers. The posts these women held at the time of the research or previously were:-

shop steward, branch organiser

shop steward, chief shop steward and welfare officer

shop steward and publicity officer

shop steward, education officer and service conditions officer

shop steward service conditions officer, equal opportunities officer
shop steward, equal opportunities officer, branch president
At the time of the questionnaire study of the shop steward population there were three female branch officers (welfare, publicity and shop stewards organiser).

One issue I wanted to explore was whether women tended to take on certain roles within the branch committee doing administrative and support jobs rather than taking offices which involved negotiating and up-front leadership positions. There were ten branch officer positions in total. These were branch secretary, executive officer, two service conditions officers, shop stewards organiser, equal opportunities officer, publicity officer, welfare officer, education officer, international relations officer. The female union officer who moved from being service conditions officer to equal opportunities officer remarked that she felt she had more authority within the branch as a service conditions officer. The female officer who moved from being education officer to service conditions offficer did so because she recognised the importance of women being involved in collective bargaining to advance union policies on women's rights.

The welfare officer felt that her job was not stereotyped within the branch as a woman's job, although it was the type of job that could have easily been viewed in that way.

So how much does the gender matter when it comes to the branch officers?
"Not at all. I think we've got over that hurdle. They tend to slip into it sometimes. 'This is a woman's job', they're very soon pulled back."

Right, now at the moment you're a branch officer with responsibility for welfare. Can you tell me a bit about that work?
"Well the welfare officer deals with people who need to go on convalescent and that covers retired members as well, people who have financial problems the union office helps people like that. And anybody who needs any form of counselling, but it's a job that you have to do on your own, because it's a very confidential job. So any of the work that I carry out isn't discussed with any other branch officers, which is a departure because we have branch officers meetings and discuss what every other branch officer is doing but mine remains confidential."

Is it seen as a woman's job perhaps?
"I don't think so, not in this branch. I mean the previous welfare officer to me was a man so I would hate to categorise it into gender roles, but I do think it does happen that we don't have a woman service conditions officer, which we probably should have. We don't have and never have had a woman executive officer, we will in the future I'm sure."

Are you going to stand for some of these jobs?
"I will I'm sure."

But some of those jobs are seen as more masculine jobs, are they?
"Oh yes."

Is that still part of the macho thing about negotiating?
"Yes it is, but it is also again the knock-on effect of most women in the authority being in lower paid jobs and the business of sitting down and negotiating with directors or the chief executive or the chief personnel officer, if you're not used to dealing with those sorts of individuals in your job, then it can be a bit daunting to go in and to start negotiating with them."
(Female branch officer)

What this interview reveals is again the inter-relation of gender role and occupational status in affecting women's union participation. Once women had got over the initial hurdles, however, they had the confidence to contemplate going on to hold other union posts.

Several of the senior female officers were conscious of their situation as possible role models for other women in the branch. Role models were seen as important in encouraging other women to become union activists:-

"We're lacking a few role models at the moment. There are not many women branch officers who are prominent."
Were you a role model when you were branch president?
"I think to some extent yes, I think I was when I was a shop steward too. There were women activists in F&CS who were very much in the forefront of what ws happening, and I think that it is important. I think role models are."
(Female shop steward, ex-branch president)

Another female branch officer commented on the importance to her of role models in developing into the union activist she had become.

Did you have any role models that helped you?
"Yes my mother very much so. She wasn't active within the unions, but she was a very assertive woman and was very political, still does have strong political views so it was always okay for me. It always felt okay to be involved in political activities. I was always encouraged to think that as a woman I could do anything and I think that has great bearing."

In some cases the role model position was actively accepted by the officer concerned, while in others it was recognised rather more hesitantly.

"The way I see myself is trying to act as a role model to encourage more women to become active in the political sphere."
(Female branch officer)

Do you think women in your position act as a role model for other women too?
"I wouldn't like to say yes, but I think probably they do. It's been said to me by women 'Well I saw you do that' or 'I saw you talk at that meeting and I thought well if she can do it I can' and that does rub off, but I don't set myself up as a role model."
(Female branch organiser)

Being a role model does, however, place an additional responsibility on a woman union officer.

And does being a role model put particular pressure on women officers to do things extra well?
"Yes, yes I constantly feel as if I'm on show, and that if I make a mistake then it's a glaring mistake, and it isn't but it's just that internally that's how you feel."

Given this additional pressure on women officers it is useful to consider why women continued as union officers. Some mentioned the importance of supportive union friends. Others had also changed jobs, partly as a result of union work, and had moved into jobs which made union activism easier, a survival strategy also adopted by some male activists. One ex-nursery nurse shop steward had moved upwards into an administrative job which was more flexible than her previous work. Moreover once a shop steward has reached branch officer level they receive cover for their union work. Another reason for continuing given by one of the female officers interviewed was involvement in new issues combined with a commitment to using the trade union to advance equal rights.

"I mean in my own case it's becoming more of an involvement in corporate issues and in issues that affect women, trying to push those issues to the front of the agenda. I mean I'm heavily involved at the moment in working with the authority and trying to draw up a new procedure for sexual and racial harassment, how we can take those cases forward. So it's a lot of the time if it's something very dear to you, a cause that you espouse and you can get involved in it then you tend to stay a steward much longer."
(Female branch officer)

5.4.i NALGO's attempts to promote women's participation and representation in the union.

Besides the role model function assumed by some of the women branch officers the NALGO branch had taken a number of measures to increase women's participation in the branch. These included the provision of childcare facilities for union meetings and attempts to negotiate cover for shop stewards. In addition the branch had developed its equal opportunities work, which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Several interviewees mentioned the childcare provision made by the branch. This consisted not only of creches at meetings but also the payment of childcare expenses where this was a more appropriate form of provision. In comparative terms this placed the branch among the more progressive of union organisations on this issue. While the case for creches at union meetings has been won in many sectors of the trade union movement, following feminist campaigning in the seventies and eighties, payment of childcare expenses is still less widespread. The practical operation of this policy is illustrated in the following interviews:-

"Childcare expenses can be claimed for union work. A creche is provided at branch meetings and is used. The branch secretary is responsible for organising the creche - and forgot once." (Female branch officer)

"The branch does try to help shop stewards with young children by first of all providing creches at the special general meetings and annual general meetings. Some years ago it was agreed that shop stewards could actually claim for a person to look after the kids at home if for example they had a meeting to go to in the evening. I'm not sure whether everybody knows about it. I claim it sometimes

because I've got twins and ironically as a male I benefit from it, where I think it was originally intended to help women. It was actually the women in the branch who pushed for it."
(Male branch officer)

The type of childcare provision made by the branch indicated an understanding that taking children to creches is not always convenient or suitable for the needs of children. One male shop steward commented on the problem as follows:-

"We ought to do something about the problem of members with young children, but it is easier said than done. We can provide child care for the period of the Branch Executive once a month, but if I had children I would be reluctant to have a kid of mine in a creche from half past four until 7 o'clock. It would be particularly tiring for a five year old. It wouldn't do the children any good. I'm sure there's quite a lot of people who feel like that."
(Male chief shop steward)

Another problem particularly for parents related to the timing of meetings. Most branch meetings were held at 5.30p.m. directly after work. This was the time which obtained the best attendance from members, but was difficult for parents. The problem of selecting a time for union meetings was illustrated in the following statement from one of the branch organisers interviewed.

"There has been a debate in NALGO about the timing of branch meetings. They are usually at 5.30p.m. with a creche provided. Some meetings, e.g. for nursery nurses and education clerks are held at 7.30p.m. Their members are good attenders at 7.30p.m. 5.30p.m. is a good time for someone who works in the Town Hall, who would not come back for 7.30p.m. Departmental meetings and some branch committees take place at lunch time."
(Male branch organiser)

In some departments attempts were made to negotiate cover for shop stewards who were in jobs which it was difficult to leave to do union

work. Given the inflexibility of some women's jobs such a move would increase women's opportunities to be active in NALGO, and was to a considerable extent understood in those terms.

"In F&CS we have lately been negotiating with the Director to set up a system to cover people involved in union work in some instances, where it's clear that the only way that time can be allowed is through cover being provided. That is currently happening with respect to one steward."
(male chief shop steward)

Lastly some women in the branch had thought about the traditional ways of running union meetings and whether they were appropriate as ways of organising women workers. The female branch organiser recounted her experience of a meeting of the nursery nurses and childcare assistants.

"It was a meeting in the Council Chamber of approximately 150 women. It was a meeting run by women with a completely different atmosphere to any other union meeting I've ever been in. The meeting wasn't run on traditional dictatorial lines where members when they were asking things were told 'No you can't discuss that now because that's item five on the agenda.' The shop stewards who were running the meeting allowed the members more leeway so they had more freedom of expression. People were able to say what they thought, even if wasn't really quite the item they were speaking on. What I found was that by the end of that first meeting and subsequent meetings I attended all the issues that were on the agenda for discussion did get discussed and debated, but not necessarily in the order that was set down on the paper. Now the bureaucracy of unions tends to mirror the bureaucracy of the service that we work in. So unions are very structured in terms of how they discuss issues. When you take the case of the nursery nurses, who are virtually 100% women, who have not got that history of meetings because it's not part of their work or part of their life, they approach it in a totally different way. The union organisation needs to actually reflect the needs of the members and not impose on them 'This is the structure and this is the committee and the agenda and you will stick to the agenda'."
(Female branch organiser)

What is noticeable about this account is that the branch organiser was able to learn from the members and was willing to let members experiment with different ways of organising. She did not take the attitude that the members, who were new to union activism, were incompetent and needed training in the proper procedures, as the more traditional type of male union organiser might have done. Her account is an example of what Feldberg (1987) refers to as the need for unions to incorporate women's culture in their organising strategies. This account contrasts interestingly with the comments of one of the shop stewards on a national NALGO women's conference she attended. She found much of the NALGO structure at the conference rather bureaucratic and questioned whether it would involve women who were not already activists.

How do you see women's position in the union? Do NALGO's attempts to involve women have any impact?
"In terms of the straightforward practical things like providing a creche, yes. Things like a women's committee don't particularly have an impact. I went to the NALGO women's conference. One of the things that was disappointing about it was that it was so bureaucratic. The starting level was we've got to have these district women's committees. Now no one's going to go along to that if they are not well and truly enmeshed in the shop steward system already. So you can't say that it pulls more women into activity, because it doesn't. I think there are things about the union structure that everyone finds off-putting, not just women."
(Female shop steward)

Another interviewee, however, viewed the women's conference as a more successful event, recognising the union-related barriers to women's participation that can exist.

"Some women also find it very difficult to be in what is a male-dominated group, because trade unionism is very male-dominated.

NALGO's idea of a women's conference was that it was just women. So it made a very safe environment for women who aren't used to public speaking to get up and to say what they wanted to say."
(Female branch officer)

What these interview accounts show is that branch officers and senior stewards were aware of some of the factors restricting women's participation in unions. There was recognition of the responsibilities of the union to provide what assistance could be given in terms of childcare provision, sensitive timing and conduct of meetings and negotiating for cover for union work.

5.5 Conclusion: an assessment of gender differences

The research findings shed some light on the processes of women's representation at various levels within the union. Under-representation at shop steward level was related to childcare responsibilities and to low occupational status, which made it difficult to exercise rights to take time off for union work under the existing facilities agreement There was also the union-related factor of the process of shop steward recruitment inasmuch as proportionately more men that women had been asked by work colleagues to stand for election as shop steward. In addition an unfavourable management response to union activism on the part of female workers may have been a factor. Under-representation at branch committee level and at branch officer level and above may have been related to the timing of meetings in evenings and at weekends. The NALGO branch

had attempted to address these problems by providing assistance with childcare and by seeking to negotiate cover for union work.

Once elected as shop steward men and women did not exhibit major differences in attitudes towards union office-holding. Their experience as shop steward was, however, influenced by their occupational position. This was most noticeable in the operation of the union facilities agreement. Women stewards were using considerably more of their own time than men stewards to do NALGO work. While this can be explained to a large degree in terms of occupational status, the interviews suggested that gender role factors were also relevant. Both male and female interviewees reported that women were more likely than men to try to make up work lost because of time taken out for union work. This suggests that the operation of union facility agreements is an important area for trade unions to consider when seeking to increase women's representation in union office-holding.

There were no significant differences found in willingness to take industrial action nor in the extent of action taken by each sex. The one gender difference found in experiences of industrial action was that some groups of women such as the nursery nurses had found gender role characteristics used against them when taking industrial action.

There were no gender differences in shop steward turnover rates, despite the fact that the union facilities agreement worked better for men than for women. Interview material did suggest, however,

that there were some gender differences in reasons for turnover. Male shop stewards were more likely to be promoted and so to resign from union office. Female shop stewards were more likely to stand down because of the pressures of their work and the lack of cover of their jobs when doing union work. The pressures and stresses of union work were, however, felt substantially by both sexes, especially at the branch officer level.

Lay activists play a vital role in maintaining trade unions as democratic organisations. An adequate level of representation of all groups of members is also an important aspect of union democracy. The impact of feminism on trade unions has contributed towards increasing female representation and to the strengthening of unions as collective organisations. NALGO was a union with a strong tradition of local lay officers running the union at a day to day level. This helped to make the union democratic, but it also placed substantial personal demands on the lay activists in terms of both their time and the stresses arising from the responsibilities they undertook. Hence the importance, which was widely recognised by informants, of cover for union work.

This chapter has examined shop steward activism and gender in terms of levels of representation, performance of the shop steward role, experiences of industrial action, operation of union facility agreements, rates of shop steward turnover and some aspects of the relationship between union activism and personal life. In Chapter 6 union policy issues related to gender will be discussed.

CHAPTER 6 SHOP STEWARD ACTIVISM AND GENDER II - UNION POLICY ISSUES

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter gender and unions have been examined in terms of issues of participation and representation. This chapter will consider the related aspect of union policies. The impact of feminism on the trade union movement in the seventies and eighties led to demands both for better representation of women in unions and for changes in union policies to give greater support to women's rights. These policy developments in the unions have been discussed in Chapter 2.4.a. In the research I wanted to explore the extent to which these changes in union policies had affected the union at branch level. This was investigated in the questionnaire with questions about bargaining priorities and views of women's position in society. In the interviews questions were asked about NALGO's equal opportunities work and about gender issues in collective bargaining.

The material in this chapter is organised in the following sections:-

6.2 Gender differences in collective bargaining,

6.3 Union policy on sexual harassment

6.4 Shop stewards' awareness of gender inequality in society

6.5 NALGO's policies on equal rights

6.6 Conclusion.

6.2 Gender Differences in Collective Bargaining

Under the heading of "gender differences in collective bargaining" three related issues will be discussed. These are:-

(a) priorities for bargaining,

(b) styles of bargaining,

(c) gender issues in collective bargaining.

Collective bargaining is arguably the most important activity of a trade union. Members in the Sheffield NALGO Local Government Branch were affected by three levels of bargaining, national, branch and departmental. In some departments departmental level bargaining was conducted almost entirely by the shop stewards' committee, in other departments branch officers were likely to be involved at an earlier stage.

Gender differences in collective bargaining may take the form of both differences in priorities for bargaining and differences in styles of bargaining. So far research on gender and unions has not established whether there are gender differences in these areas. Unions have at times taken up issues of equal rights in collective bargaining and this work has increased to some extent as a result of the impact of second-wave feminism on trade unions. The degree to which this had happened in the Sheffield NALGO Local Government branch will be discussed in 6.2.c.

6.2.a Priorities for Bargaining

Effective trade union organisation involves identifying priorities for bargaining and campaigning which can mobilise and unify the membership. It is not, however, always easy for unions as collective organisations to identify what their members' priorities are. Members may have different priorities arising from their work situations. It is also possible, although not proved, that male and female members have different bargaining priorities. The traditional trade union stereotypes have often assumed that men are more interested in money and women in conditions of work, shorter working hours and holidays. These stereotypes are related to assumptions that men are breadwinners and women are primarily homemakers. The problem with these assumptions is that they are not based on careful research, they tend to ignore occupational divisions within each sex, and they ignore variations in personal and family circumstances. Moreover the assumption that women are less interested in pay than men makes little logical sense when one considers the fact that women are lower-paid than men and so have more material interest in higher pay as a bargaining priority than men. Indeed, as will be seen in discussing the questionnaire findings, tackling the problem of low pay was seen as a bargaining priority for women. It was, however, strongly supported by shop stewards of both sexes. This illustrates the difficulty of identifying issues on the trade union bargaining agenda as exclusively 'men's issues' or 'women's issues'. Many bargaining achievements may disproportionately benefit one sex, but still benefit

both sexes, such as obtaining a workplace nursery or an agreement on personal leave. Moreover trade unions as collective organisations are based on recognition of the common interests of all workers, as expressed in the slogan:-

> An injury to one is an injury to all
> A victory for one is a victory for all.

From this perspective of trade unionism, at the end of the day, there are no distinct sectional interests whether based on occupation, gender or any other division. This argument of trade union solidarity can be used by radicals in the labour movement to argue that affirmative action is in the interests of white males, or can be used by conservatives to argue that women and black people are being divisive when they demand the labour movement supports action to end discrimination. Thus trade union unity does not rest upon ignoring inequalities among workers. It involves a balancing act between finding demands and campaigns which can easily unify the whole membership and supporting the demands of groups of workers who have been disadvantaged and discriminated against. To achieve this balance unions need to identify the bargaining priorities of their membership.

In the questionnaire stage of the research informants were asked a rank order question about their views of what NALGO's bargaining priorities should be. The answers of male and female shop stewards are shown in Tables 44 and 45. The most popular bargaining priority for both sexes was "pay increases for the lower paid." 23 (35.9%) of shop stewards put this first. The second most popular priority was

"Service conditions" which was put first by 15 (23.4%) of shop stewards.

Table 44: Views of NALGO's Negotiating Priorities - Male Shop Stewards
What do you think NALGO's negotiating priorities should be? Please rank in order of importance.

	First Ranking	Second Ranking	Third Ranking
Service conditions	10 (23.8%)	7 (16.7%)	4 (9.5%)
Higher pay	7 (16.7%)	7 (16.7%)	5 (11.9%)
Equal opportunities	2 (4.8%)	4 (9.5%)	4 (9.5%)
Shorter working week	2 (4.8%)	2 (4.8%)	4 (9.5%)
Job-sharing agreements	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Longer holidays	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Health and safety	0 (0.0%)	5 (11.9%)	11 (26.2%)
More time off for trade union work	1 (2.4%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
New technology agreements	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Pay increases for the lower paid	13 (30.9%)	7 (16.7%)	5 (11.9%)
Job security	4 (9.5%)	7 (16.7%)	5 (11.9%)
More opportunities for training and promotion	1 (2.4%)	1 (2.4%)	1 (2.4%)
Workplace nursery	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.4%)	3 (7.1%)

(N = 42)

For male shop stewards the two clear bargaining priorities were "pay increases for the lower paid" and "service conditions". Their third priority was "higher pay".

Table 45: Views of NALGO's Negotiating Priorities - Female Shop Stewards
What do you think NALGO's negotiating priorities should be? Please rank in order of importance.

	First Ranking	Second Ranking	Third Ranking
Service conditions	5 (22.7%)	2 (9.1%)	6 (17.3%)
Higher pay	0 (0.0%)	4 (18.2%)	2 (9.1%)
Equal opportunities	2 (9.1%)	1 (4.5%)	1 (4.5%_
Shorter working week	0 (0.0%)	1 (4.5%)	1 (4.5%)
Job-sharing agreements	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Longer holidays	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Health and safety	0 (0.0%)	3 (13.6%)	2 (9.1%)
More time off for trade union work	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (4.5%)
New technology agreements	1 (4.5%)	1 (4.5%)	2 (9.1%)
Pay increases for the lower paid	10 (45.5%)	6 (27.3%)	1 (4.5%)
Job security	2 (9.1%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (4.5%)
More opportunities for training and promotion	1 (4.5%)	3 (13.6%)	3 (13.6%)
Workplace nursery	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (9.1%)

(N = 22)

Female shop stewards shared the two most popular bargaining priorities with their male colleagues. Indeed female shop stewards demonstrated a stronger level of support for these demands. 45.5% of women and 30.9% of men put "pay increases for the lower paid" first. 22.7% of women and 23.8% of men put "service conditions" first. Men did attach more importance to "higher pay" than women, with 7 (16.7%) of men ranking this first, whereas no women did. Women did rate "new technology agreements" and "more opportunities for training and promotion" more highly than men. It is reasonable to assume that this reflected their occupational experience in Council employment.

The questionnaire results suggest that there are some gender differences in bargaining priorities, but that the similarities are greater. Many interviewees seemed to share this view. The most frequently mentioned difference in bargaining issues related to negotiating policies on dealing with sexual harassment. The following reply is typical of the responses:-

"Well there's the issue of sexual harassment. But I don't think there are many differences on other issues, but of course low pay affects women more than men, but it's not exclusive to women."
(Female shop steward)

Another negotiating issue mentioned by one male shop steward which particularly affected women was new technology. He noted that female workers tended to use word-processors for longer periods than men and that often the word-processors were badly positioned in terms of safety. Another male male shop steward was aware of women in his

department raising the issue of time off to look after sick children. The branch organiser stated that women members had raised with her the issue of childcare provision by the employer after the Midland Bank had announced the provision of childcare for its employees.

One interviewee explained the difficulty of distinguishing different priorities related to grade and to gender:

"I can't think of any differences between men and women in a particular area that I have dealt with. There are differences between areas, but the department tends to be organised so that one particular job is perceived as a women's job, therefore there are very few men in it. Similarly on the technician side they are nearly all males. There are tensions between groups but I can't really say that's necessarily down to gender."
(Male chief shop steward)

Another interviewee mentioned the job-sharing issue, which had been seen in the branch as a priority for women, although in fact it was an issue for all members.

So do you think women members have different priorities sometimes for the issues the union should be taking up in collective bargaining?
"Yes, yes certainly, yes, I mean job-sharing was definitely seen as a woman's issue within this branch and as a women's priority. It isn't, but that's how women saw it at the time, and women pushed that along."
(Female branch officer)

The final part of this statement indicates a strong recognition by senior women activists in the branch that most issues affected both sexes, as illustrated in the following observation from a female shop steward.

"The low pay thing at the end of the day is about pay, and while there's many more women that fall into the low pay category, it's not an exclusive women's thing. An evening up of pay is seen as important by a lot of members."
(Female shop steward)

The female branch organiser had found male and female members equally supportive of NALGO's campaign against low pay in local government, although a majority of the low-paid members were female. She stated:-

"In my experience it's just as likely to be the 'higher-paid' male shop stewards speaking on behalf of the low paid women workers as it is to be a woman. It isn't out of any sense of 'I'm doing the right thing'. It's because they have recognised that the issue is a trade union issue, it's not just an issue for women."
(Female branch organiser)

This sense of issues being recognised as trade union issues and so issues for all members could also be applied to the issue of sexual harassment. The branch organiser argued that this was a union issue for all members, but that it was one in which women's views needed to be taken especially into account. So the gender distinction that operated here was not that it was an issue only for women members, but that it was an issue in which women needed to take the lead in policy-making.

"There are issues on which a branch should take the views of women into account. If you're talking about sexual harassment, I wouldn't expect, nor would it happen that men would make decisions without actually taking the views of women on board, but that doesn't make it a women's issue. In terms of moving forward I think it is divisive to say 'These are women's issues' because we could say well 'Those are men's issues' and leave it to men to deal with them, or 'These are black members issues', but they're all our issues. Apartheid isn't an issue only for black members, it's an issue for white members as well."
(Female branch organiser)

To some degree this similarity in bargaining priorities between male and female trade unionists may reflect a degree of similarity in lifestyle, in that both groups were in most cases in full-time

employment. One senior female activist, who had served in the past as branch equal opportunities officer, pointed out that trade unions need to consider not only inequalities in work, but inequalities in being able to get to work in the first place. She referred to the problems of people with disabilities, women with young children and women returners in obtaining employment.

"I think people do have different priorities, but sometimes I think that the priorities that people have determine whether or not they are actually able to come to work at all."
(Female shop steward)

6.2.b Styles of Bargaining

Some interviewees commented that while they were not necessarily aware of gender differences in priorities for bargaining, they did believe that men and women sometimes used different styles of bargaining and approached it in a different way.

"I certainly think there are different styles of bargaining. However right-on the men may be, sometimes they do find it, and I include myself in this, very difficult not to be putting a forthright and strident and traditional macho position to management. Women are less likely to do that. That certainly is a distinction that I'm conscious of."
(Male shop steward)

He noted too that when he had employed a less macho style of bargaining, Personnel staff who had expected an antagonistic session had been really surprised to find him so reasonable.

An example of an effective low-key style of bargaining was given by one of the branch organisers:-

"I've always worked on the basis that if I can achieve what I've set out to achieve, on behalf of whoever I'm representing, by persuading the people across the table from me that it was their idea in the first place and they can take the credit for it, then that's fine by me. But the men I've worked with don't like working like that. They want to be the ones to say 'We've negotiated this. I've got this for my members.'"
(Female branch organiser)

She stressed too that negotiating is a learned skill, and that while not every shop steward might be good at it, both men and women can learn bargaining skills. This sort of approach to bargaining 'demystifies' it as an activity and removes it from being associated with any innate characteristics of people. One of the difficulties about learning bargaining skills is obtaining the necessary experience of bargaining. Given the important issues for the members often involved in bargaining, experienced negotiators sometimes found it difficult to let newer and less experienced stewards take the lead in negotiations. Here there was a possible conflict between the short-term interest of the union, to have the best possible negotiator, and the long-term interest, to develop more shop stewards with negotiating skills.

"When you know that you can do something, and you're with another steward and you're not sure whether they can do it or not, giving them the space to negotiate, and potentially not do it as well as you would, is always difficult, but I think that's something you've got to overcome. I wouldn't have got on as far as I did if people hadn't allowed me to do negotiating and make mistakes."
(Female shop steward)

The opportunity for new stewards to develop negotiating skills was important in encouraging women's representation in the union. The following statement by one of the female brach officers emphasises the importance of women being involved in negotiations, on grounds both of different perspectives on negotiations and different negotiating styles.

So you said you were involved with the local negotiating committee as a branch officer, do you think it's important for women to get involved in negotiating work?
"Yes, very much so, to put the woman's point of view, because I do believe that women have a different perspective on how things should be done. I do believe that men and women are equal, but I also believe that women function in a different way. I think that women come at it from a very different angle, I mean I don't think that we are aggressive about how we negotiate in this branch, because that isn't how we do it, but I do think women come from a slightly different angle when they're negotiating."
(Female branch officer)

On the other hand another female steward discussed the importance of resisting gender stereotypes in bargaining. Where there was a substantial number of women shop stewards in a department they had been able to work out strategies to do this, but gender roles tended to become re-asserted when women were negotiating alongside men.

Are there sometimes different styles of bargaining of men and women?
"I think there are different styles of bargaining first. I'm sure the differences do show themselves in women and men. When I was first active as a shop steward a lot of the work I did was with other women shop stewards. We used to talk sometimes about who was going to take the dominant role. We'd use the classic set-up. One of us goes in screaming and shouting and the other comes in all calm and reasonable. When there are two women doing it you can swap the roles. I think there is an issue about men automatically adopting the dominant role. It is more difficult for women to lead in negotiations with men."
(Female shop steward)

6.2.c Taking up Gender Issues in Collective Bargaining

Trade unions can take up gender issues in collective bargaining both by placing items of specific concern to women members on the agenda and by promoting women as negotiators. To some degree both processes were happening in the Sheffield NALGO Local Government Branch. As recounted in 2.3.e, the new technology dispute, and 4.2.e, regrading disputes, the branch and departmental shop stewards' committees had put a lot of energy into particular campaigns which concerned low-paid women members.

Agreements had been negotiated on areas like job-sharing, working with new technology and career progression for low-paid workers (the clerical career grade). The branch had not been successful, despite attempts to do so, in negotiating for the provision of a workplace nursery. Nonetheless the negotiating priorities which had been taken up by the branch and by departmental shop stewards' committees had not been ones which neglected the interests of women members.

There had also been attempts particularly at departmental level to encourage union office-holding by women. In well-organised departments efforts had also been made to negotiate cover for shop stewards, which would have particularly assisted lower status women workers to take on union office and hence participate in collective bargaining.

6.3 Union Policy on Sexual Harassment

Negotiating to protect members facing sexual harassment was identified by some interviewees as a bargaining priority for women. At a national level NALGO had issued publicity material about sexual harassment and campaigned against it. The early stages of trade union policy on sexual harassment had involved both educating female members that they had a right to object to offensive behaviour and educating male members about what forms of behaviour constituted harassment and were unacceptable. One of the branch officers described this process.

Are members getting more politicised on the issue of sexual harassment?
"Yes I think so because we have been doing a lot of work around it, so women are beginning to understand it much more and I think so are men, but I think there is still a long long way to go dealing with that. It's very subtle, sexual harassment can be very subtle and because of the position of women in society anyway women are loth to put that name to it."
(Female branch officer)

At the time of the research there was a debate going on in the branch about how to handle cases of harassment. Some aspects of this had been fairly straightforward, such as the recognition that women with complaints of harassment needed female officers and stewards to handle their cases. In the case of black members complaining of racist harassment NALGO tried to find a black representative to assist them.

"We do try, if it's a woman who's suffering from sexual harassment then it is a woman steward or a woman branch officer who deals with it, if it's racial harassment we find a black steward or a black member who will help that person."
(Female branch officer)

One of the most difficult issues for unions in dealing with harassment cases is the problem of representing both sides if the complainant and the accused harasser are both members of the union. This issue was very much at the sharp end of equal opportunities policy. The branch organiser explained that there were two trains of thought about this debate. One view was that all members were entitled to representation The other view was that there were some circumstances in which unions should not represent members. This latter view had been adopted by the shop stewards' committee in Family and Community Services after much debate.

"We've taken a position of non-representation of people accused of harassment. That is a very hard position that people find difficult to understand, but there again I think that is being more honest and is actually being more upfront about what is at the heart of equal opportunities policies. What you are talking about is empowering people who have less power than those who exercise it most of the time."
(Male shop steward F&CS)

There were some reservations about the F&CS position within the branch. The consequence of the departmental shop stewards' committee not representing the accused harasser could mean that representation was provided by branch or district levels of the union. This could, one branch officer, suggested actually advantage the accused harasser, since a branch or district NALGO representative might have more credibility with the management than a departmental representative.

"There are more complex issues about representation that we've not sorted out in the branch, particularly I'm thinking about areas like sexual harassment. Historically the branch has had a view that it represents everybody, so if you have a member who is making an accusation of sexual harassment against another NALGO member, we finish up representing both or ought to in some people's eyes. Now I've every confidence in the stewards in F&CS, but given management's

response and attitudes to power relationships, I'd be worried, because if a branch or district officer were representing the person accused, the management might give more weight towards that person, in the case of branch officers because they deal with us frequently and in the case of district officers because of their status. I don't want to be in that sort of situation. So there are some of us in the middle of the debate who are saying we've got to have a mechanism where there's automatic representation for the person making an accusation, but the person who is being accused has got to justify the right of representation from the union."
(Male branch officer)

What the debate about representation in cases of harassment shows is that the branch had been able to respond to new issues. The educational work explaining to members what is meant by sexual harassment had been tackled. There was also a recognition that changing people's behaviour in this area was a long-term task. There had been a willingness to rethink traditional policy about representing all members, and whether it was appropriate over this issue, although different conclusions had been reached about it. Clearly the comments in interviews showed that there had been consciousness-raising about the problem of sexual harassment and extensive discussion about how to deal with it. It was still an on-going debate inasmuch as there was no easy answer to the problem of representation in harassment cases. This arises partly because the facts of the matter may be in dispute. It may not be until well into the hearing of the case that it is possible to establish definitely whether harassment has occured or not. Moreover if the union conducts some sort of internal enquiry before granting representation this could be seen as prejudging the issue before the employer hears the complaint. This is the difficulty with the position of asking members to justify their right of representation. Nonetheless unions cannot

represent members clearly guilty of harassment, if that representation is taken to implicitly exonerate such conduct or minimise its seriousness. Thus unions face a conflict between the rights of members to representation, which includes the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty, and their commitment to fighting sexism and racism, which includes finding ways of empowering women and black members.

6.4 Shop Stewards' Awareness of Gender Inequality in Society

As the previous section on sexual harassment indicates there had been considerable discussion in the branch about some aspects of women's oppression. Shop stewards' awareness of gender inequalities in relation to employment and union work has been discussed earlier in the thesis, especially in relation to union office-holding and facility time. Their awareness of gender inequality at a societal level was explored with an attitudinal question in the questionnaire.

The statements were designed to test support for women's rights and views of the position of men and women over a number of issues. Some of these statements were ones where a clear feminist position might be identified, such as support for women's right to work, women's right to choose abortion and nursery provision. Other statements were less obviously related to demands of the women's movement and were designed to test how deeply informants had thought about gender roles and women's position in society. They thus addressed issues debated among supporters of women's rights. These included whether the Equal Pay Act and Sex Discrimination Act had improved women's position, whether men are as oppressed by gender roles as women, and whether women fail to take up opportunities for equal representation in public life. This last question was included to assess whether there was any support for a more conservative and individualistic view of equal opportunities, which sees women as partly to blame for continuing inequality.

Table 46: Shop Stewards' Views of Gender Inequality in Society

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The Equal Pay Act and Sex Discrimination Act have done much to improve the position of women.					
Male Stewards	0	17	7	16	2
	(0.0%)	(40.5%)	(16.7%)	(38.1%)	(4.8%)
Female Stewards	2	6	3	11	0
	(9.1%)	(27.3%)	(13.6%)	(50.0%)	(0.0%)
All Stewards	2	23	10	27	2
	(3.1%)	(35.9%)	(15.6%)	(42.2%)	(3.1%)
All women should have the right to seek paid work.					
Male Stewards	26	16	0	0	0
	(61.9%)	(38.1%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)
Female Stewards	16	5	1	0	0
	(72.7%)	(22.7%)	(4.5%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)
All Stewards	42	21	1	0	0
	(65.6%)	(32.8%)	(1.6%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)
Men are oppressed by sex roles as much as women are.					
Male Stewards	8	13	7	11	3
	(19.0%)	(31.0%)	(16.7%)	(26.2%)	(7.1%)
Female Stewards	2	8	1	9	2
	(9.1%)	(36.4%)	(4.5%)	(40.9%)	(9.1%)
All Stewards	10	21	8	20	5
	(15.6%)	(32.8%)	(12.5%)	(31.3%)	(7.8%)
Nurseries should be available for all children under five.					
Male Stewards	25	15	1	0	0
	(59.5%)	(35.7%)	(2.4%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)
Female Stewards	14	6	1	1	0
	(63.6%)	(27.3%)	(4.5%)	(4.5%)	(0.0%)
All Stewards	39	21	2	1	0
	(60.9%)	(32.8%)	(3.1%)	(1.6%)	(0.0%)
Positive action policies are needed to give women real equality at work.					
Male Stewards	16	19	1	5	1
	(38.1%)	(45.2%)	(2.4%)	(11.9%)	(2.4%)
Female Stewards	10	8	1	3	0
	(45.5%)	(36.4%)	(4.5%)	(13.6%)	(0.0%)
All Stewards	26	27	2	8	
	(40.6%)	(42.2%)	(3.1%)	(12.5%)	(1.6%)

Table 46: Shop Stewards' Views of Gender Inequality in Society (continued)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Women instinctively care for children better than men do.					
Male Stewards	1	8	8	19	5
	(2.4%)	(19.0%)	(19.0%)	(45.25)	(11.9%)
Female Stewards	2	2	3	10	5
	(9.1%)	(9.1%)	(13.6%)	(45.5%)	(22.7%)
All Stewards	3	10	11	29	10
	(4.7%)	(15.6%)	(17.2%)	(45.3%)	(15.6%)
Women still experience discrimination and unequal treatment in many aspects of life.					
Male Stewards	21	20	0	1	0
	(50.0%)	(47.6%)	(0.0%)	(2.4%)	(0.0%)
Female Stewards	12	8	2	0	0
	(54.5%)	(36.4%)	(9.1%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)
All Stewards	33	28	2	1	0
	(51.6%)	(43.8%)	(3.1%)	(1.6%)	(0.0%)
Women should have the right to choose whether to have an abortion.					
Male Stewards	28	12	2	0	0
	(66.7%)	(28.6%)	(4.8%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)
Female Stewards	10	6	3	2	1
	(45.5%)	(27.3%)	(13.6%)	(9.1%)	(4.5%)
All Stewards	38	18	5	2	1
	(59.4%)	(28.1%)	(7.8%)	(3.1%)	(1.6%)
Women often fail to take up opportunities for equal representation in public life.					
Male Stewards	5	21	5	8	2
	(11.9%)	(50.0%)	(11.9%)	(19.0%)	(4.8%)
Female Stewards	7	12	3	0	0
	(31.8%)	(54.5%)	(13.6%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)
All Stewards	12	33	8	8	2
	(18.8%)	(51.6%)	(12.5%)	(12.5%)	(3.1%)
Laws on social security and taxation should be changed to treat men and women equally.					
Male Stewards	28	11	1	1	0
	(66.7%)	(26.2%)	(2.4%)	(2.4%)	(0.0%)
Female Stewards	17	5	0	0	0
	(77.3%)	(22.7%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)
All Stewards	45	16	1	1	0
	(70.3%)	(25.0%)	(1.6%)	(1.6%)	(0.0%)

(N = 64)

Some of these answers showed very low levels of gender difference. The question about whether equal rights legislation had done much to improve the position of women produced a scattered response for both sexes. A critical view of the legislation was demonstrated by 50% of women and 42.9% of men. No one opposed the statement that "All women should have the right to seek paid work". The principle of women's right to paid employment was strongly supported by both male and female stewards, if rather more strongly by women. 72.7% of women and 61.9% of men strongly agreed with this statement. There was no support for the traditional view that women's place is in the home.

The next statement "Men are oppressed by gender roles as much as women are" was a statement which produced a scattered response among both sexes. 50% of women and 33.3% of men disagreed with this statement, giving the conventional feminist response. Support for nursery provision for all children under five was overwhelming among both sexes. 95.2% of male stewards and 90.9% of female stewards agreed with the statement "Nurseries should be available for all children under five." This shows widespread acceptance of one of the demands of the women's movement. NALGO has done a certain amount of campaigning for workplace nursery provision, which may have influenced informants views.

Support for positive action policies to give women equality at work was strong. 81.8% of women and 83.3% of men agreed with the need for such policies. As with the case of nursery provision this indicates

support for NALGO's policies on equal rights. Belief in the maternal instinct, as expressed in the statement "Women instinctively care for children better than men do.", was strongly rejected by both sexes. 57.1% of men and 68.2% of women disagreed with this statement.

Recognition of continuing inequalities between men and women was strongly evidenced by both male and female shop stewards. The statement "Women still experience discrimination and unequal treatment in many aspects of life." was strongly supported by both sexes, with 97.6% of male stewards and 90.9% of female stewards agreeing. This suggests that, while there was a mixed response to the issue of how effective equal rights legislation had been, there was an understanding that equality has not yet been achieved.

Support for women's abortion rights was stronger among male stewards than female stewards, with 66.7% of men and 45.5% of women strongly agreeing with the statement "Women should have the right to choose whether to have an abortion." Abortion rights has always been one of the most controversial aspects of unions' women's rights policies. It was an issue on which NALGO as a union nationally had taken a clear pro-choice stand.

The statement "Women often fail to take up opportunities for equal representation in public life." was slightly more strongly supported by women than men. A majority of stewards of both sexes agreed with it. This implies that they thought to some degree the responsibility

for under-representation lay with women. This question was asked at a time when there was a woman prime minister and a certain amount of political propaganda arguing that opportunities were there for women if only they would take them up. Maybe too shop stewards because they had taken on representative office themselves were less sympathetic to others who were more reluctant to do so.

Support for changes in social security and taxation law to treat men and women equally was given by both sexes. 100% of women and 92.9% of men agreed that such changes should take place.

What these answers show overall is considerable support among shop stewards of both sexes for women's rights. This may indicate that NALGO's policies were representative of their active membership and that shop stewards had been influenced by union policies in support of equal rights. The gender differences in replies were not substantial. On five statements women gave more feminist replies than men. These were:-

"All women should have the right to paid work."

"Men are oppressed by sex roles as much as women are."

"Positive action policies are needed to give women real equality at work."

"Women instinctively care for children better than men."

"Laws on social security and taxation should be changed to treat men and women equally."

On two statements men gave more feminist replies than women. These were:-

"Women should have the right to choose whether to have an abortion or not."

"Women often fail to take up opportunities for equal representation in public life."

Comments in interviews gave further indications of levels of understanding of equal rights. Awareness of the processes of gender inequalities in employment was illustrated in a number of comments. One informant noted that men tended to plan their careers more than women did.:-

"I think there's a difference between men and women regarding careers. I think men enter into thinking about careers as an essential thing in their early twenties. That's partly that they are forced into it, partly they choose it because they are looking for promotions."
(Female shop steward)

Another interviewee commented on the lack of women applicants when the Director of Libraries post became available. She did not explain this in terms of women's failure to apply, but in terms of the failure of the Library Department to provide career development for women.

"Libraries is a traditionally low-paid women's department where there is a very great distinction between professional and non-professional grades. The thing that staggered me in Libraries is that when the Director left, they didn't get a single woman applicant for Director of Libraries, although there was a national advertisement. In a service that's got the highest proportion of women, there was not a single woman applicant for the chief officer post. That's got to say a lot about the way the department fails to encourage women to look for careers."
(Female shop steward)

In one department a male NALGO shop steward had campaigned successfully to improve equal opportunities. His shop stewards' committee had been in favour of all posts being internally advertised first which conflicted with equal opportunities, because it meant that groups currently under-represented in employment would stay under-represented. As he notes the departmental policy was against branch policy and this may have made it easier to overturn it.

"Up unto three years ago our shop stewards' committee had a policy of internal advertisement first, which was against branch policy. I promoted a campaign to change that to concurrent advertising. I wasn't chief shop steward at the time. The chief shop steward opposed that, being a fairly old male technician. We held general meetings throught the department and my view won the day, so that perhaps proves our members do support equal opportunities."
(Male chief shop steward)

A couple of interviewees mentioned the issue of ring-fencing when a redeployment process was taking place. This presents difficulties for unions, and for employers with a genuine commitment to equal opportunities, because there is a responsibility to protect the employment of existing staff, but this delays increasing the proportion of under-represented groups in the organisation. This type of issue indicates the problems for trade unions of how equal rights policies are implemented in practice. This difficulty was expressed in the two following statements in reply to questions about how much support there was among members for NALGO's equal opportunities policies.

"In terms of the issues of equal opportunities, yes there is an awareness, but what we haven't grasped is how to deal with them in practical terms."
(Female branch organiser)

How much support is there among members for NALGO's policies on equal opportunities?
"I think there's total support theoretically, but when you ask people what they are going to do about it, then that's the problem. A lot of people see these issues as work issues rather than union issues."
(Male shop steward)

Understanding of how women's position in society can affect their situation in trade unions was shown in the following statements from male shop stewards.

"On our shop stewards' committee the nursery officers rarely contribute to the discussion, unless it's about their service. When it's about their service they are very confident. They rarely get involved in discussion about general issues."
(Male shop steward)

"Trade unions have until recently been a man's world and although some progress has been made towards breaking that down, we've got a long way to go. One of our shop stewards, who's been active a long time, fifteen years ago she got wolf whistles as she walked to the platform to speak at conference."
(Male chief shop steward)

One of the women branch officers, however, also indicated the positive ways in which women's experiences of discrimination can be used in trade unions to support other oppressed groups.

"Women I find tend to understand more of the issues around racism, but that's partly because they are a group of people who are discriminated against as well."
(Female branch officer)

6.5 NALGO's Policies on Equal Rights

In Chapter 2.4.a and 2.4.b actions taken by unions nationally to raise women's levels of union representation and develop policies on women's rights have been discussed. These developments had also taken place at the local level within the Sheffield NALGO Local Government Branch. One of the practical aspects of this was to include the issue in shop stewards' training. The education officer explained in interview how one way the NALGO branch had expressed its commitment to equal opportunities was to make it a compulsory item in shop stewards' training.

"There is a slot on equal opportunities on branch training. That is formal branch policy. On union training courses students are allowed to set their own agenda, but it must include something on women and something on race. Sexual harassment is always chosen by women as an issue."

The branch had an equal opportunities sub-committee which was responsible for the day-to-day development of equal opportunities work. This work had been organised in a number of ways. Sometimes well-attended and successful meetings of members had been organised on issues such as job-sharing and the positive action project (Ch 2.3.c). At first the equal opportunities sub-committee had been composed of the equal opportunities officer, the two service conditions officers, the branch organiser and any members who cared to attend. The problem with this very open structure was that the committee had been unable to develop any coherent long-term priorities for its work, since different members would attend each meeting and raise different issues.

Moreover there was a danger of the equal opportunities committee becoming a dumping ground for many equal opportunities issues which should have been addressed elsewhere in the branch. One of the ex-equal opportunities officers described the problem as follows:-

"The equal opportunities committee and the equal opportunities officer had become a dumping ground for things that nobody else quite knew what to do with. It was also a conscience-salve. 'We've got an equal opportunities committee, give it to them to deal with.' There was no recognition within the mainstream of the branch that equality issues affected them. So you'd have a service conditions committee meeting once a month, and all they did with issues relating to women, black people and disability was to pass them to the equal opportunities committee to deal with. It just became marginalised to the extent that as Equal Opportunities Officer, I used to get all the post that came from CND. That really is an equal opportunities issue!"
(Female ex-equal opportunities officer)

As this statement shows an equal opportunities committee can easily become overloaded not only because work is passed on from other committees, but also because it is trying to tackle all forms of discrimination simultaneously. Following these early problems in the organisation of equal opportunities work, the branch was re-organising its equal opportunities work. The proposed re-organisation was similar to that adopted by NALGO nationally with four self-organizing groups, one for women members, one for gay and lesbian members, one for black members and one for members with disabilities. The purpose of this re-organisation was both to create space for disadvantaged groups to articulate their demands and to give some stability and focus to this work.

One interesting and significant aspect of the way equal rights work in relation to women had been conducted was that there was an

understanding of occupational divisions among women. The senior female activists leading this work did not assume that all women had exactly the same interests or would be mobilised on the same issues. They were very conscious of the danger of feminism being seen as a middle class women's issue. In terms of feminist politics they were operating within a framework which recognised diversity among women and believed that this needed to be acknowledged and incorporated into union organising strategies. The organisation of assertiveness-training courses, for instance, had been undertaken to challenge inequalities of both gender and class. Attempts to negotiate provision of a workplace nursery had raised income differences among women in a sharp way. The Council had been prepared to provide a nursery, but the proposed charges were more than most women in Council employment could afford. The result was that the branch had opposed nursery provision on the basis the Council was offering it.

"We'd almost reached agreement on getting a workplace nursery introduced in the Council, and some of the women within the branch actually got it thrown out, because the charges were way beyond the financial capacity of most women who worked for the Council. It wasn't a nursery for other than reasonably well-paid women."
(Female shop steward)

The existence of these social divisions among women was also illustrated by an incident recounted by one of the equal opportunities officers I interviewed. The equal opportunities committee decided to organise a women-only social event for the women shop stewards. Only four women shop stewards attended. Women-only socials were clearly seen as a 'middle-class feminist' scene. As she put it:-

"Many women stewards did not see the point of a women-only gathering."
(Female equal opportunities officer)

Another female equal opportunities officer discussed differences among women in terms of personal situation, occupation and education.

"Higher paid women have better access to childcare facilities. Women who have husbands with a decent income might feel they have a choice about whether to work when they have children. Women who are in poorer families or who haven't got the support of a partner who is earning, might not have a choice about whether they return to work, and I think there is a social class issue. In terms of educational background as well, people have different expectations and ambitions for themselves. Whilst I think there's a difference in ambition between men and women, I think there's a difference between different women, who've been through different life experiences. I'm seen as an educated person, who's managed to progress into a reasonably well-paid job. What credibility am I going to have with people who are still low-paid and at the bottom of the ladder. I think traditionally feminism has been seen as a middle-class issue, and that's very much to do with being educated and articulate."

One way the branch had tried to tackle the issue of being able to articulate grievances and demands was to provide assertiveness training. The branch education officer reported that she was organising assertiveness training for women shop stewards. This was aimed to tackle inequalities of both gender and class.

"I'm trying to organise assertiveness training for women shop stewards, a stage beyond women's bridging courses, particularly for women in low-paid jobs from local backgrounds. These lower-paid women tend to be suspicious of 'middle-class feminists.'"
(Female branch officer)

This work was later continued by another female branch officer. It was aimed not only at women shop stewards, but potentially for all women members. The purpose of the course was not only to develop women as union activists, but to help them to become more assertive

generally. Thus the focus was on changing women's situation in work and in their personal lives, as well as enabling them to be more assertive about raising women's issues in the union. These courses were being organised both in Sheffield and on a district basis.

What's the take-up been for those courses?
"Well I ran them. I've ran four courses, two for Sheffield branch which were for nursery nurses. We did them primarily for nursery nurses at the end of the dispute. You can only deal with twelve, thirteen people on any course and they were full and we ran two district courses both of which have been full and we're running another one in January. It is an ongoing process and the women enjoy it. We have recall days where they can get together and it acts as a support for women as well, so the women in Sheffield had got immediate support, the women in the district tend to keep a network going so they know other women."

And at those recall days what was the feedback, had it empowered the women?
"Yes, on the recall day that we have just done a fortnight ago three of the women in the group had changed their jobs and two had left their husbands. It certainly empowered them to take decisions that they had been wanting to take for some considerable time. They had all felt better able to go back to their jobs and to state what they wanted. They all said that they had learned to say no which was very effective, because women at the bottom of the pecking order tend to get work piled on them and they'd learned to say no, they couldn't do any more."
(Female branch officer)

6.6 Conclusion: The Extent of Gender Differences and Gender Similarities

The research on collective bargaining and union work on equal rights undertaken in this study indicates both gender differences and also areas where male and female stewards had similar priorities. In terms

of priorities for collective bargaining both male and female stewards had the same main priorities, namely improving pay of lower-paid workers and protecting and improving service conditions. There was some gender variation in other bargaining priorities, with men focusing more on higher pay and women being more concerned about new technology and training and promotion. These gender differences can be related to employment position. Overall, however, the research findings do not support the view that there is a big gender gap in bargaining priorities.

Some gender differences were found in styles of collective bargaining, with women tending to adopt a more low-key style of bargaining. These differences arose both from gender roles of shop stewards and from attitudes of some male managers, who did not feel comfortable negotiating with women. Where a number of women were involved in bargaining on a team, they had tried to develop strategies to break down these gender roles. Gender differences were clearly stronger in styles of bargaining than in priorities for bargaining.

Issues of gender inequality had been addressed by the branch in a number of areas of collective bargaining. These were regrading of lower-paid, mainly female, staff, such as nursery nurses, nursery provision, use of new technology and cover for shop stewards. It appears therefore that union policy on equal rights had had some impact on the branch's negotiating priorities, despite the problems of organisation of equal opportunities work.

Questions on gender roles in society showed that support for equal rights was strong among shop stewards of both sexes. The similarities between women and men were greater here than the differences. This may be the result of working in a local government culture, with a strong formal commitment to equal opportunities. It may also reflect the influence of trade union education on these issues.

Attempts to develop equal opportunities work at branch level had encountered a number of problems and the branch had rethought ways of organising on these issues. Interviews showed an ability to be self-critical and to avoid complacency about what the branch was doing in this area. Among the officers involved in this work there was an understanding of the complexity and diversity of equal opportunities issues. Despite the problems of branch structure innovative work had been carried out around assertiveness training, which had been able to address inequalities of both gender and class.

CHAPTER 7 SHOP STEWARD ACTIVISM AND DEPARTMENTS WITHIN THE CITY COUNCIL

7.1 Introduction

Sheffield City Council at the time of the data collection phase of the research (1987-1990) employed a workforce of around 34,000, in 15 main departments and a few smaller ones (figures from Sheffield City Council Annual Reports). Of these approximately 7,500 were white-collar workers, the majority of whom belonged to NALGO. During this period there was a union membership agreement in force, which required employees to belong to a trade union. Most white-collar staff had elected to join NALGO, but a minority belonged to other unions such as APEX (Association of Professional, Clerical and Computers Staffs) or MATSA (the white-collar section of the General, Municipal and Boilermakers Union, as the union was known at the time of the research). The other main relevant features of the history of the Sheffield NALGO Local Government Branch and of the research setting have been discussed in Chapter 2.3.

The departments varied in size, function and location within the city. Some departments were based centrally in the Town Hall, others were located at many sites within the city. This geographical factor was commented on by some shop stewards in interviews, the general view being that it was easier to organise a workforce on one central site (e.g. Employment) rather than a workforce dispersed across the city,

as in the case of Education (Schools and Colleges), F&CS and Housing. The main departments were:-

Administration and Legal

Art Galleries

Cleansing

Education

Employment

Environmental Health

Estates

Family and Community Services

Housing

Libraries

Museums

Planning and Design

Recreation

Treasury

Works

During the period of the research some departments were re-organised and some renamed. For instance the Estates department was merged with Planning into a Department of Land and Planning. The Department of Employment was renamed the Department of Employment and Economic Development. There were also a number of small departments, such as Personnel, Elections Office, and Chief Executive's Office which in a number of statistics, such as those in the Positive Action Report (Stone 1984) are included in the "Administration and Legal" category.

Given the large number of departments it is useful to group them for purposes of analysis. In 7.2 a number of possible ways of classifying these departments is discussed, namely by gender balance, by occupational and grade structure, by work content and nature of work, and by history of union organisation.

In 7.3 qualitative material from interviews is used to discuss departmental structures and cultures. This material is related to organisational theories of workplace cultures. Explanations of variations in departmental culture were presented by interviewees in terms of work content, history of the department and the personality of the chief executive.

In 7.4 the relation between department and union activism is examined. The extent of departmental variations in union activism and of departmentally-based factors associated with activism is considered. The research findings indicate that this is a significant and under-researched aspect of workplace trade unionism. This material is organised in the following sub-sections:-

a) department and distribution of shop stewards

b) department and attitudes to being a shop steward

c) department and bargaining priorities

d) department and experiences of industrial action

e) department and operation of union facility agreements

f) department and shop steward turnover

g) department and women's representation within NALGO

h) the operation of departmental shop stewards' committees.

7.2 Approaches to the Study and Classification of Departments

The four classifications of departments explored in this section are employed to assess factors providing motivators or barriers to union activism. In Chapter 2.2.a explanations of union participation were discussed. The work of Wertheimer and Nelson (1975) was referred to, which discusses women's union participation in terms of work-related, cultural-societal-personal and union-related barriers to participation. It was argued that this approach needed to be developed by considering these areas in terms of both barriers to participation and reasons for participation. Classifying departments by gender balance allows consideration of cultural-societal-personal factors affecting union activism. Classification by occupational and grade structure and by work content and nature of work allows consideration of different aspects of work-related factors. Classification by history and pattern of union-organisation within the department provides for the discussion of union-related factors. As has already been noted there was some overlap between gender balance and proportion of higher graded posts in departments, so it is recognised that these classifications, while useful for purposes of analysis, do involve some degree of overlap.

7.2.a By Gender

A classification of departments by gender is provided in the Positive Action Report (Stone 1985). This classification refers simply to numbers of men and women in departments and, if employed to classify Sheffield City Council's departments, gives a three way split as follows:-

Table 47: Classification of Departments by Gender

Male-dominated Departments
Works
Planning and Design
Environmental Health
Recreation
Cleansing

Balanced Departments
Estates
Housing
Museums
Treasury
Administration and Legal
Employment
Art Galleries

Female-dominated Departments
Family and Community Services
Education (Administration)
Libraries

This classification is relevant to the study of women's union activism, in that women are more likely to take on leadership roles when in a majority (Cobble 1990, Wertheimer and Nelson 1975). Indeed, this study does lend support for this hypothesis in that a majority of female shop stewards answering the questionnaire came from the Education Department. One of the branch officers in interview remarked that many leading women branch activists had come from Family

and Community Services. If women activists come disproportionately from female-dominated departments, then this may be evidence of **personal-societal-cultural** factors affecting union participation. Departmental variations in employees' marital status and presence of children may also relate to levels of union activism.

The breakdown of departments of informants answering the questionnaire by gender composition of department was as follows:-

Female-dominated departments	34 (53.1%)
Balanced departments	13 (20.3%)
Male-dominated departments	16 (25.0%)
Missing	1 (1.6%)

(See Table 2, Page 123)

The only department with a majority of female stewards anwering the questionnaire was Education (12, 70.6%), which was one of the departments where the majority of the workforce was female. All stewards answering the questionnaire in Land & Planning and Design & Building were male.

If we consider the possible impact of gender role factors on union activism in terms of departmental variations it was noticeable that there were variations in the presence of children. A majority of stewards in Education and Design & Building had children, but only a

minority of stewards in F&CS and Housing. There were, however, no obvious departmental variations among shop stewards concerning the amount of time spent on housework and care of relatives.

7.2.b By Occupational and Grade Structure

This is a classification which clearly has some overlap with classification by gender, since more low-paid workers tended to be found in female-dominated departments (Stone 1975). Nonetheless there were also some divisions within the categories in the previous section. For instance in Education, where much of the work consisted of administration, there were far more low graded posts. This contrasted with Family and Community Services which did have many low graded clerical jobs, but also had many professionals employed.

The male-dominated departments (Cleansing, Environmental Health, Planning and Design, Recreation and Works) all had a high proportion of higher graded posts, associated with various aspects of professional work. The small numbers of women employed in these departments tended to be on the lower salary points, often scale 1 or 2. Similar patterns of gender inequality across the grades were found in the more 'gender-balanced' department of the City Treasury. In the Employment department women were better represented on the higher grades, but they also filled all the lower paid jobs in the department. In Housing, a gender-balanced department, there was a

high proportion of both sexes employed on the lower salary scales, with only 21% of men and 7% of women employed in high status posts.

Thus while the overall tendency was for inequalities of gender and grading to go together, with more higher grade posts in male-dominated departments, there were some variations among the gender balanced and female dominated departments, which reflected the work and history of the respective department. These differences could also be seen in levels of educational qualifications and in the number of years informants had lived in the Sheffield area. For instance all the Education stewards had lived in the Sheffield area for 15 or more years, suggesting mainly local recruitment in this department or long periods of employment in the service. This would correlate with recruitment to lower-paid grades, whereas professional jobs were more likely to be filled by national advertisement and recruitment. These differences in grading and qualification levels at entry were reflected in the age at which stewards had left full-time education. There were noticeable departmental differences here. In Education seven stewards had left by the age of 16 and another 8 by the age of 18. Only 2 had stayed in education past the age of 21. In F&CS 10 out of 11 stewards had been in education until the age of 21. All 4 Design & Building stewards had left by age of 18, whereas all 3 Land & Planning stewards had left after 21. Education stewards appeared the least well qualified academically with only 5 out of 17 having 'A' levels. There were clear departmental variations in reaching degree level education. In F&CS 8 shop stewards (72.7%) had degrees, in

Housing 6 (85.7%), in Education 2 (11.8%), in Land & Planning 3 (100%) and in Design & Building 1 (25%). Thus the formal educational qualifications generally tended to correspond with the grading structure, reflecting the bureaucratic recruitment processes in local government.

7.2.c By Work Content and Nature of Work

The other important aspect, besides occupational status, of **job-related** factors affecting union activism is work content. Several interviewees suggested that the work in some departments, such as Housing and F&CS, was far more likely to encourage awareness of social issues, because the work involved dealing with clients who faced a number of social problems. Thus issues such as levels of public expenditure on welfare services and changes by the government in benefit regulations affected people's day-to-day working lives in the performance of their job. These changes affected the stress level of the job, both because local government officers had repeatedly to learn new sets of regulations, and because they sometimes exacerbated the problems of the clients. It was thus impossible for staff in these departments to avoid becoming aware of certain political and social issues. Moreover the frequent contact with clients who were poor or in others ways socially disadvantaged led to greater awareness of social inequality. The work content meant that both the job and the working environment were stressful, which made employees more

aware of the need for union representation. The social awareness of staff in departments like F&CS and Housing arose both because individuals who were interested in social problems were more likely to take work in these departments and because their work experience encouraged and deepened such awareness. The professional training too, for jobs such as social worker, involved acquaintance with social science material dealing with inequalities of class, ethnicity, gender and disability.

In looking at the shop stewards answering the questionnaire we can attempt a classification by work content of department, identifying four departments as ones which particularly promoted social awareness. These departments were Employment, Family and Community Services, Housing and South Yorkshire Probation. While all the Council departments were affected by the problems of local government financing and so staff were likely to be aware of political issues of this kind, the work in these departments involved coming into contact with people with social problems in a way that administrative work in departments like Education and Treasury did not.

Table 48: Social Awareness of Departments

Shop stewards from 'socially aware' departments (F&CS, South Yorkshire Probation, Housing and Employment)	20 (31.3%)
Shop stewards from other departments	44 (68.7%)

Several dimensions of attitudes to work were explored in the questionnaire. These included questions about commitment to work and views of the importance of local government. In Chapter 2.2.a the significance of commitment to work as a motivator for union activism was discussed. For my research this raises the question of whether departmental variations in work content and attitudes to work can contribute to explanations of variations in levels of union activism.

Shop stewards from all departments showed a strong belief in the importance of local government, an attitude fostered by both work and union involvement. NALGO had campaigned for many years for the defence of local government and public services. In the questionnaire informants were asked a number of questions about their views of local government. There was a high level of support for the proposition that "Local Government can do a lot to improve the quality of people's lives". There was a more scattered response to the proposition that "In the long-run local government cannot carry out policies in opposition to central government", with substantial minorities in F&CS and Housing disagreeing. In these two departments, too, there were reservations about the right of local government to increase the local taxation and doubts about the value of services provided to the public. This may be because staff in these departments have more contact with the public and so are more aware of cases of dissatisfaction with public services. Thus while they shared a belief with stewards in other departments in the value of local government, they were also more critical about the quality of services provided.

High levels of commitment to work, in terms of finding the job interesting and varied, were shown by stewards in F&CS, Polytechnic, Libraries, Education, Employment, Police, Environmental Health, Land & Planning, Design & Building, Works, South Yorkshire Probation, Cleansing and Recreation. A more split response occurred in Housing and Treasury. These were departments where workers had been at the centre of the dispute with the Council over the introduction of new technology and where some staff were involved in doing a lot of routine clerical work (see Chapter 2.3.e) Thus interest in the job did not correlate necessarily with working in a department whose work promotes social awareness.

7.2.d By History of Union Organisation

Lastly there is the **union-related** dimension of factors affecting union activism which needs to be considered. There were substantial variations in levels of industrial conflict and industrial action within departments. Departments which had been particularly involved in industrial action were Family and Community Services and Housing. There were also groups within other departments who had substantial experiences of disputes, such as the nursery nurses in Education. These disputes had provided some departmental shop stewards' committees with experienced union activists. In the case of Family and Community Services these past disputes had affected not only union organisation within the department, but had also influenced the whole of NALGO.

"The 1970s field social workers' strike was important for NALGO. Social workers were more likely to sustain their involvement after the dispute. They attempted to influence NALGO structures, e.g. on procedures for handling industrial action. They have more understanding of structural issues."
(NALGO branch organiser)

In the questionnaire study informants were asked about their views of the Council as an employer. This included some questions about the "no redundancy" policy which the Council operated at the time of the research. Firstly informants were asked whether they consider the Council to be a "model employer", a description which it sometimes used of itself. No shop stewards from any department agreed strongly with the view that the Council is a model employer. All 11 F&CS stewards disagreed or disagreed strongly with this statement, reflecting the frequent conflicts between NALGO in this department with the Council and the stresses of working in the area of social service. In the more politically 'moderate' department of the City Treasury, however, five out of six shop stewards agreed that the Council was a model employer.

Views of the Council's "no redundancy" policy revealed some similar departmental variations. The statement that "Only trade union action can defend jobs" was strongly supported by F&CS stewards, with 6 agreeing strongly and four agreeing. Among the seven Housing stewards three agreed strongly and three agreed. In Education out of 17 stewards 4 agreed strongly and six agreed with this. This statement was included to identify traditional militant trade union attitudes to the problem of redundancy. The statement "The Council uses temporary

contracts to avoid making people redundant", which implied a critical view of the costs to employees of the Policy was supported particularly by stewards in Housing, F&CS and Education, which may reflect the employees' experiences in specific departments. In Housing two agreed strongly and the remaining five agreed. In F&CS seven out of 11 stewards agreed with this statement. In Education five stewards agreed strongly and eleven agreed. On the other hand six of the eleven F&CS stewards agreed with the statement that "The policy is an important benefit of working for Sheffield City Council", as did nine Education stewards. Eight F&CS stewards agreed that "The Council expects too much job flexibility in return for the "no redundancy" policy", as did six Housing and seven Education stewards. Thus attitudes to the "no redundancy" policy showed some appreciation of it, but also a cautious and critical perspective, which did not rely on it to protect jobs in the long run.

Answers to questions about the Council as an employer and its approach to industrial relations clearly indicated a more critical approach among shop stewards in some departments than others. While this no doubt related to departmental variations in work experience it may have also been related to departmental factors concerned with union organisation, given that departmental shop stewards' committees operated as an influence on attitudes and values for shop stewards. In departments with well-organised shop stewards committees, such as Housing and F&CS, a majority of shop stewards reported that they

socialised regularly with friends who were active trade unionists, suggesting a reinforcement of pro-union values in their social lives.

A number of questions were included in the questionnaire about the social and political attitudes of shop stewards. The answers did indicate some departmental variations. For instance informants were asked whether they thought NALGO should affiliate to the Labour Party. 10 out of 11 stewards in F&CS (90.1%), 5 out of 7 Housing stewards (71.4%) and all 3 Land & Planning stewards supported Labour Party affiliation. A majority of stewards in Education, 13 out of 17 (76.5%), Treasury (66.7%), and Design and Building (100%) were opposed. Overall 48.4% supported Labour Party affiliation. Informants were also asked about their own membership of political parties. Rates of political party membership were highest in Housing (57.1%) and F&CS (45.5%) and Treasury (50%) This suggests some linkage between working in departments where the work promoted social awareness and where there had been a history of trade union activism, and membership of political parties.

7.3 Departmental Structures and Cultures

Variations in gender balance, grade levels, work content and union history could all be identified when examining the structure and culture of the different departments. Each department varied not only in its size and its proportion of promoted posts, geographical distribution of its members and other structural factors, but also in its culture. Studies of industrial relations (Millward and Stevens 1986) have identified size of workplace as a factor affecting levels of union organisation, with larger workplaces more likely to be better organised. In the case of the Sheffield NALGO Local Government branch this applied to the departmental level, as well as the branch level of union organisation with shop stewards' committees in larger departments being less dependent on branch officers for assistance in dealing with day-to-day problems.

A number of interviewees, when asked how the shop stewards' committee worked in their department, discussed issues of size and geographical location. This indicates the importance of Terry's discussion of the problems, arising from geographical dispersal, for unions in organising a fragmented workforce in Local Government (Terry 1982). In the Employment Department the central location of the department was seen as a factor which made union organisation easier.

"Nearly everyone's in the same building. We're all within three minutes' walk of each other and everyone sees each other often. It's not city-wide, where it's difficult to organise meetings. Whenever we had a departmental meeting it was always well-attended. We got good responses to campaigns or days of action, because you can cover everyone in half a day, just going round the teams."
(Ex-shop steward, Employment Department)

In the Education Department, which was the largest department, there were two shop stewards' committees, one for the staff working in the education offices in the town centre, the Central Campus Shop Stewards' Committee, and one for staff in the Schools and Colleges. The latter group were more difficult to organise because of the physical dispersal of the members. In many schools there might be just one or two NALGO members, such as a school secretary and a technician.

The Chief Shop Steward of F&CS reported that union organisation in that department had to cover about 150 worksites across the city. Nonetheless this factor had not led to a poor overall level of union organisation within the department. This suggests that despite Terry's observations (Terry op. cit.) about the difficulties of organising physically fragmented workplaces, it is possible to do so effectively, if union organisers possess sufficient energy and commitment.

The general organisational culture in local government was bureaucratic, with clear structures, levels of responsibility and authority and grading of work. This culture had been promoted by NALGO (Chapter 4.2.c) in its campaigns for national salary scales in local government. This culture appeared to be common to all departments, although some departments had a higher proportion of professional workers than others. Some of the professions in local government, such as planning and social work, were ones which did not have traditions of independence from government bureaucracies, but

which had developed within a bureaucratic culture. Thus there was no significant tension noticed here between professional and bureaucratic cultures.

Where departmental variations in culture occurred they were in some ways related to the work of the department, with a service-orientation predominant in departments such as Family & Community Services and Housing and more of a business-orientation in departments such as the Department of Employment and Economic Development. There was also a more noticeably politicised and pro-union culture in some departments that others. This arose either from work content, as in Family & Community Services and Housing, or the work content and recent history, as in the case of the Department of Employment and Economic Development. It should also be noted that some departments had different sub-cultures within them. For instance one of the shop stewards in Land and Planning noted that planners tended to be more "liberal-minded" than surveyors in their general social attitudes.

The gender balance and the number of women in senior posts also affected the departmental culture. In departments like F&CS and Housing where more women were found at a senior level there was more awareness about acceptable and unacceptable forms of behaviour, whereas some departments such as Recreation and Works had a more male-dominated workplace culture. In some cases these issues of gender roles and appropriate behaviour were still under negotiation. One senior female local government officer referred to the problems some

male colleagues encountered in "door situations". They were not sure whether they should open doors for women or not. She noted too that some departmental directors were unsure how to address a meeting of senior officers where one was female and ended up either awkwardly saying "Lady and gentlemen" all the time or ignoring the one woman present and saying "Gentlemen" all the time. She noted that both practices could make the woman feel uncomfortable.

Interviews with shop stewards and branch officers revealed perceptions of differences in organisational culture and a number of possible explanations of these differences.

"The one thing I have learned from working in different departments both in trade union terms and in job terms is that each department does have a different culture. In the end these cultures are reflected in the trade union organisation as well as in the work. The differences are based on the roles that each department has. It's the overall job of the department. Social work is traditionally liberal minded people. The Employment Department was set up as a political department and politicos are wonderful at being able to tell every one else what to do, but not necessarily very good at doing it themselves. In Personnel there is always an uneasiness about being in the same union as the people they might be in dispute with."
(Shop steward)

The argument presented here is that it is the overall tasks of the department that affects the culture, not the individual job. This implies that being a typist or a technician in one department may be different from another department. This may be particularly important in relation to the union participation of lower status workers.

The causes of distinct departmental cultures were suggested in a number of statements.

"Nationally Housing and Social Services tend to be the most active departments. In Sheffield I would add Education Services. The job content makes people more aware of social issues. It's the cultural atmosphere of departments."
(NALGO branch organiser)

Some departments were identified as having a strong pro-union culture:-

"In F&CS most people accepted that trade unionism was part and parcel of their daily lives."
(Shop steward, ex-F&CS, Personnel Department)

This was contrasted with the Personnel department

"There's no sense of trade unionism at all and there's a real sinister feeling of 'if you keep you mouth shut and say nothing you'll be alright'."
(Shop steward, ex-F&CS, Personnel Department)

Stress at work was another major factor affecting departmental culture which was commented on in a number of interviews. Among several interviewees there was a recognition that stress levels were much higher in F&CS than other departments, and this was related directly to the work content of the department and the increasing incidence and magnitude of social problems in the community which it served. Other departments too experienced increasing pressure at work, because of reduced staffing and the financial problems of local government, but their staff did not appear to experience the same level of stress. The problem was definitely perceived as qualitatively worse in F&CS than other departments. The general levels of stress in that

department and the occupational causes of them were described in the following statement:-

"The other issue in F&CS is the levels of stress that people are working under. People feel stress more acutely, looking at all the poverty and social inequality in the world. People in there are inevitably going to be more aware of the fact that the world isn't fair, because they face it every day in their work. Whereas in departments like Personnel the unfairness isn't as obvious to them. They're not facing it in the same way."
(Shop steward ex-F&CS)

For shop stewards who were working in F&CS life could become extremely difficult if they were facing a critical situation in both their job and their union work at the same time. In both cases they were faced with handling cases whose outcome had major significance for the lives of others.

"I know that sometimes it becomes extremely difficult to cope. It becomes extremely stressful. I suppose it's the nature of the work that has a lot to do with it. It's very difficult for social worker shop stewards who've got a potential admission to care and who are dealing with a disciplinary case, where somebody's facing dismissal possibly, and the two of them are clashing. The stress factor that people face is very high"
(Shop steward F&CS)

Moreover changes in social policy had made the work more difficult to perform, reducing job satisfaction and causing a long-term decline in morale. Many staff in F&CS had to cope with their reduced ability to help clients, as illustrated in the following statement:-

"In welfare rights the advice we tend to give these days is preventing people's benefits being reduced, rather than increasing their benefits, which is where I came in in 1979."
(Shop steward F&CS)

High stress levels at work can produce two types of responses to union organisation. People can become inactive union members in an attempt to reduce their overall workload, or they can become more involved as a response to the pressures of work. In Family & Community Services it appeared that high levels of stress at work tended to promote higher levels of union involvement. Thus this department indicates the conjunction of a number of circumstances favourable to the creation of a strong pro-union workplace culture. The evidence presented in the next section on union activism in different departments will develop the analysis of this dimension of union activism.

7.4 Department and Union Activism

In part 7.4 of this chapter I propose to report research findings by department and to relate this material to the earlier discussion of departmental variations in factors providing motivators for or obstacles to union activism.

7.4.a Department and Distribution of Shop Stewards

51 (79.7%) of informants answering the questionnaire had been shop stewards for under five years. Short periods of service were especially noticeable in F&CS, Housing and Education. Treasury, Land and Planning and Design and Building appeared to have more longstanding shop stewards. There were clear departmental variations in rate of shop steward turnover, which will be discussed in 7.4.f. The average length of time spent in office as a shop steward is a useful measure of the stability of union organisation within a particular department. The presence of a number of experienced, long-serving stewards produces a certain continuity in union culture and traditions, as well as providing a reservoir of expertise, which helps a union to operate more effectively.

In the questionnaire shop stewards were asked how many other shop stewards there were in their department. This question was included to see whether they tended to work on their own as shop stewards or whether they felt supported by union colleagues. A question was also asked about the size of the constituency. These replies were not

always easy to analyse, partly because some constituencies had unfilled shop stewards' posts in them and because some new stewards did not feel sufficiently knowledgeable to give an answer. The table below gives calculations of the total number of shop stewards in each department, based on averages of replies, but excluding answers which gave numbers less than the number of returned questionnaires for that department.

Table 49: Number of other NALGO Shop Stewards in Department

	No of stewards	No of replies	Response rate
Cleansing	3	1	33.3%
Design and Building	11	5	45.5%
Education	25	17	68.0%
Employment	7	1	14.3%
Environmental Health	6	2	33.3%
F&CS	25	11	44.0%
Housing	21	7	33.3%
Land and Planning	7	3	42.9%
Libraries	11	2	18.2%
Police	1	1	100%
Polytechnic	7	3	42.8%
Polytechnic Students' Union	1	1	100%
Recreation	6	1	16.7%
South Yorkshire Probation	1	1	100%
Treasury	8	6	75.0%
Works	7	1	14.3%
Missing		1	
Total	158	64	40.5%

When shop stewards indicated the number of other shop stewards in their department they also in some cases noted that there were vacant constituencies. This occasionally meant that some stewards had to cover other constituencies as well as their own. This accounted to

some degree for the three shop stewards in Education who had constituencies of 100 members or over. The average size of constituency overall was 46.3, but it was noticeably higher in Education where the average size was 71.4 union members . This may have reflected some difficulty of obtaining shop stewards in this department.

Table 50: Average Size of Constituency by Department

Design and Building Services	39.0
Education	71.4
Family and Community Services	39.3
Housing	29.1
Land and Planning	45.0
Polytechnic	38.3
Treasury	48.8
Overall average	46.3 members

Replies to a number of questions in interviews suggested more formalised patterns of union organisation in some departments than others. These related particularly to the operation of shop stewards committees. For instance some informants could easily answer questions about when the shop stewards committee met because it did so on a regular basis. The same tended to hold for posts of responsibility, such as chair, secretary and minutes secretary, on departmental shop stewards' committees, A majority of informants in F&CS, Treasury, Education and Design and Building held posts of responsibility on their shop stewards' committee. The interpretation of this will be discussed more in 7.4.g.

Informants were asked in the questionnaire about their pattern of attendance at NALGO meetings. 68.8% regularly attended constituency meetings, i.e. meetings with the members they directly represented as a shop steward. Presumably the others kept in touch with their members via the telephone or notices. All informants in the following departments regularly attended constituency meetings:- F&CS, Housing, Libraries, Employment, Police, Design and Building, Cleansing and Recreation. This suggests effective shop steward organisation in these departments, although apart from F&CS these were all departments which tended to be concentrated geographically and where shop stewards were likely to work on the same site as their constituents. They did not therefore face the problems arising from the situation of the isolated NALGO representative in a school.

Informants were also asked in the questionnaire survey whether they held any posts on the branch committee. Housing stewards particularly seemed under-represented on the branch committees, and interviews with them suggested this arose from a conscious preference to focus on the department rather than the overall branch as the important unit of union organisation.

The questionnaire also investigated participation in the union beyond branch level. Informants were asked whether they had even been a delegate to NALGO conference, in order to find out whether they had experience of the operation of the union at national level. Some departments (F&CS, Housing, Land and Planning and Treasury) had higher

levels of stewards' attendance at annual conference and these tended to be the better organised departments. This suggests they were more highly involved with debates in the union nationally.

Table 51: Attendance at NALGO Conference by Department

Department	No of Delegates	No of Stewards	% of Delegates
Cleansing	0	1	(0%)
Design and Building	0	5	(0%)
Education	2	17	(11.8%)
Employment	0	1	(0%)
Environmental Health	0	2	(0%)
F&CS	5	11	(45.5%)
Housing	2	7	(28.6%)
Land and Planning	2	3	(66.7%)
Libraries	0	2	(0%)
Police	0	1	(0%)
Polytechnic	0	3	(0%)
Poly Students' Union	0	1	(0%)
Recreation	0	1	(0%)
S Yorks Probation	0	1	(0%)
Treasury	3	6	(50%)
Works	0	1	(0%)
Missing	0	1	(0%)
Total	14	64	(21.9%)

(N = 64)

7.4.b Department and Attitudes to Being a Shop Steward

Informants in the questionnaire survey were asked their views of what constituted a good shop steward. Elements of the departmental culture could be seen in the answers from shop stewards in Education, F&CS and Housing. The leadership role was rated more highly by stewards in

Housing, with 3 of the 7 stewards in this department putting it first. Education stewards emphasised the importance of grievance-handling with 4 putting it first and 6 second. Among other noticeable and characteristic comments 4 of the 11 F&CS stewards stressed political consciousness as a defining feature of a good shop steward, while 5 of the Education stewards emphasised the 'competent representative' role. Thus these answers fitted in with the prevailing departmental cultures which have been identified, namely a more politicised culture in F&CS and Housing and a more bureaucratic and administrative culture in Education.

When asked what where the good things about being a shop steward, Education and F&CS stewards were particularly likely to emphasise that they found union work interesting. This suggests pro-union cultures in these departments and maybe in the case of Education, where there were many low-grade workers, that the union work provided a positive work experience not provided by the actual jobs that some shop stewards performed. Informants in the questionnaire survey were also asked what they considered to be the bad things about being a shop steward. Three of the seven stewards in Housing put management pressure first. This probably reflected conflicts with the management in the department, especially in relation to time off for union work. High expections from the members were definitely seen as a problem in Education with 5 informants putting this first and 4 second out of a total of 17, i.e. slightly over half ranked this first or second. F&CS stewards rated "stress from excessive work" highly with four

putting this first and 2 second, i.e. just over half ranking it first or second. This reflects the fact (as will be seen in 7.4.e) that they tended to put in more hours on union work than shop stewards in many other departments.

A related question to the one about the bad things about being a shop steward was a question about what obstacles informants encountered as a shop steward in representing members' interests. Apathy of members was ranked first by 28 (43.8%). This included 3 of the 4 Polytechnic stewards, 4 out of the 6 Treasury stewards and 8 out of 17 Education stewards. In several departments where only one steward had replied this also achieved a first ranking. In F&CS and Housing one and two stewards respectively put this forward, suggesting that stewards in these departments experienced less of a problem of apathy from members compared to other departments. This would fit with the impression of these departments as being more activist in union terms and so having a membership more likely to back up shop stewards. F&CS stewards rated opposition from managers highly as an obstacle to representing members' interests. Out of 11 stewards 3 ranked it first and 4 second. To some degree the same was true of Housing with one steward ranking it first and three second. Opposition from councillors (i.e. the formal employers) received a more scattered response. Consciousness of this factor appeared to be slightly higher in F&CS, with five informants ranking it first, second or third. "Cash limits imposed by central government" was ranked first by 14 informants (21.9%). Four of these came from F&CS (36.4%), two from Housing (28.6%) and four from Education (23.5%).

In the questionnaire informants were asked what they considered to be the good things and the bad things about NALGO as a trade union. These questions were asked in relation to both the local and the national levels of the union. NALGO's local work on protecting service conditions was rated reasonably highly by stewards in F&CS, Housing, Education and Treasury. In F&CS five (45.5%) ranked it first or second, in Housing three (42.9%) ranked it first, in Education 15 ranked it first, second or third (88.2%) and in the Treasury three (50%) ranked it first, and five ranked it first, second or third (83.3%). No other options produced such a clear pattern of support for local union activity. The emphasis on service conditions may have reflected the importance of this union activity, and the fact that it was a major part of the work of departmental shop stewards' committees.

When asked about the bad things about NALGO as a trade union, 5 out of 17 Education stewards (29.4%) ranked first the statement that "NALGO is out of touch with ordinary members" for the local level, as did two (28.6%) Housing stewards. Six (54.5%) of F&CS stewards ranked first "NALGO is too bureaucratic" for the local level, a criticism not supported to anything like the same extent by stewards in other departments. F&CS shop stewards were also rather more critical of NALGO's effectiveness on equal rights, four ranking this failing second and four third. This may indicate a higher level of expectations in terms of union democracy and union work on equal rights, which would reflect a radicalised political culture in the

department. Education stewards tended to rank more highly the statement "NALGO's membership is apathetic" with four ranking this first and seven second (64.7%). Three stewards in Design and Building ranked this statement first and one second (80%). Two stewards in Treasury put this first and one second (50%). These answers may have reflected lower levels of membership activism within these departments.

At the national level the statement "NALGO is out of touch with ordinary members" was put first by three Housing stewards (42.9%) and eight Education stewards (47.1%). The statement that "NALGO is too bureaucratic" was ranked first by 3 F&CS stewards and second by another two, so 45.5% of stewards in this department ranked this criticism first or second. This shows some correspondence with their view of the union locally.

In the questionnaire informants were asked about their views of union democracy. They were asked to indicate agreement or disagreement with statements about the operation of NALGO at local and national levels. Of those (31.3%) who agreed with the statement that locally the executive ran the union six came from Education, five from the Treasury (83.3%) and 2 from Land & Planning (66.7%). 59.4% overall agreed with the statement that "Members have the opportunity to decide policies, but often fail to participate", a result which relates to criticisms of members' apathy, but also a belief that NALGO in its structures is fundamentally a democratic union. Six (54.5%) F&CS

stewards, three (42.9%) Housing stewards, eight (47.1%) Education stewards, five (83.3%) Treasury stewards and five (100%) Design and Building stewards agreed with this statement. 68.8% agreed that "Active members run the union and decide policy". Eight (72.7%) F&CS stewards agreed with this statement, as did five (71.4%) Housing stewards, 12 (70.6%) Education stewards and five (83.3%) Treasury stewards. These answers suggested that shop stewards felt participation in NALGO's democratic processes at branch level was worthwhile and that activists had a good chance of winning support for their views. At the national level a majority of stewards in F&CS (63.6%), Housing (100%), Treasury (66.7%), and Land and Planning (66.7%) agreed with the statement that "The Executive effectively runs the union and decides policies". Overall 46.9% agreed with this statement.

7.4.c Department and Bargaining Priorities

Questions about bargaining priorities provided another opportunity for exploring any possible differences in departmental union cultures. F&CS stewards tended to rate equal opportunities rather higher than others, 3 putting it first and 2 second. 10 of the 11 F&CS stewards put it in their first five rankings. This indicates some adherence to radical values here, as shown also in the attitude of the F&CS shop stewards' committee towards harassment cases (Ch 6.3). The most popular overall bargaining priority was "Pay increases for the lower

paid" (see Table 18, Page 160). This showed some interesting departmental variations. 7 out of 11 F&CS stewards put it first (63.6%), as did 5 out of 7 Housing department stewards (71.4%). In Education, a "female-dominated" department, out of 17 stewards 5 (29.4%) ranked it first and 6 (35.3%) ranked it second. Other departments, where there were sufficient informants to compare, gave more scattered responses to qeustions about negotiating priorities. What this suggests, given the large number of low paid workers in Education, was that perhaps political attitudes were more significant in determining bargaining priorities on this issue that the more obvious economic factors.

7.4.d Department and Experience of Industrial Action

Experience of industrial action did indicate some departmental variation, not surprisingly since some of it no doubt related to departmental disputes. In the following departments all shop stewards had been involved in industrial action: F&CS, Housing, Polytechnic, Libraries, Environmental Health, Polytechnic Students Union, Land and Planning, Works, South Yorkshire Probation and Recreation. Three stewards working in Employment, Police and Cleansing had not been involved in any industrial action. In Education, Treasury and Design and Building a majority of stewards had been involved in industrial action. The only department where a majority (6 out of 7) had taken part in an overtime ban was Housing.

The ban on cover for vacant posts as a sanction had been operated by all stewards in Housing, Land and Planning, Works and Recreation. A majority (8 out of 11) stewards in F&CS had also operated it. A ban on use of telephones (a difficult sanction to operate because it creates difficulties in doing one's work) had been operated only in F&CS, where 9 out of 11 stewards had taken part in it, and Housing and Design and Building. Far more departments had been involved in bans on voluntary duties, with 6 out of 7 stewards in Housing participating. A ban on talking to councillors had been operated in 4 departments, F&CS, Housing, Land and Planning and Design and Building. In F&CS a majority of stewards (7 out of 11) had operated this sanction. 50% of stewards had taken part in a half-day strike, with no obvious significant departmental variations.

60.9% of stewards had taken part in a one-day strike, with 10 out of 11 stewards in F&CS and all 7 stewards in Housing involved. 4 out of 7 stewards in Housing had been involved in strike action lasting between 1 and 3 months. 5 of the 11 stewards in F&CS had been involved in other forms of action besides those offered on the list in the questionnaire, including in one case a workplace occupation, while working for another authority.

These answers suggest higher levels of militancy in F&CS, Housing and to a lesser degree Design and Building. This is despite the fact that shop stewards in F&CS and Housing, as providers of front-line services, may face more difficulties in taking action than workers

with more office-based jobs who do not encounter the public on a day-to-day basis. Perhaps this suggests that effective union organisation can overcome these work-based difficulties in undertaking industrial action.

7.4.e Department and Operation of Union Facility Agreements

Trade union facility agreements provide in a number of ways for the effective operation of trade unions in the workplace. They cover matters such as time off for union work, access to members, provision of rooms for union work and union meetings, use of office equipment and sometimes secretarial services. The effective operation of union facility agreements is a good measure of the level of union organisation in a workplace. Facility agreements are important in promoting union participation. Their presence reflects a degree of support for union activists by work colleagues and a degree of acceptance of unions by management.

In the questionnaire informants were asked how many hours per week on average they spent on NALGO work. These answers showed that some departments clearly had more active shop stewards than others. F&CS had no stewards spending less than five hours per week on NALGO work, 3 spending 6-10 hours and 5 spending 11-15 hours, while the remaining 3 spent 16 hours or more on union work. Housing similarly had 6 stewards spending 6-10 hours per week and 1 spending 16-20 hours. Other departments tended to have some stewards spending 0-5 hours and others spending more time. It is reasonable to interpret these answers as reflecting both greater demands from members on shop stewards in these departments and also a greater tendency within the department to see workplace problems in union terms. It did not appear to relate to size of constituency. Both F&CS and Housing shop

stewards had constituencies of below average size (Table 50, page 301).

Related to the issue of how much time shop stewards spent on union work was the question of how much facility time they enjoyed. Most stewards (57.8%) reported they worked to an agreement which allowed them to take off time as needed for union work, without specifying any fixed hours. Some did indicate facility time allowed in number of hours, especially branch officers and chief shop stewards who had three days per week off. It should be noted that most stewards did know how much facility time they were entitled to.

Difficulties of taking facility time seemed to be greater in departments where shop stewards were spending more time on union work (over 5 hours per week), e.g. F&CS and Housing, but most departments had some stewards who encountered difficulties and some who did not. Apart from the cases of F&CS and Housing, problems of access to facility time did not seem to vary greatly with department and were maybe more a function of grade and occupation. Pressure from management over facility time was experienced most in Housing, ranked first by 3 out of 4 stewards who reported problems of access. Pressure from clients was ranked first by 3 F&CS stewards out of 5 reporting problems in taking time allowed for union work. For Education stewards the biggest problem was work piling up, ranked first by 6 out of the 7 who reported problems. Thus the form the problem took tended to vary with the work of the department.

Stewards in the following departments reported that most union work was done in work hours: Polytechnic, Polytechnic Students Union, Land and Planning, Works, Cleansing and Recreation. With the exception of the first two these were predominantly male departments. In the following departments informants did union work either mostly in work time or half in work time and half in own time: F&CS, Housing, Design and Building. In Education and Treasury some informants covered the three categories.

A number of questions were asked in the questionnaire about the relation between job and union work. There were no major departmental variations in access to information or access to members. In the case of flexibility in organising time and work this was experienced as a benefit of work by all F&CS stewards. In three departments, Housing, Education and Employment some stewards reported that this was not the case. Nonetheless the job-related factors did not appear to produce any major departmental variations.

7.4.f Department and Shop Steward Turnover

Considerable information about shop steward turnover by department was obtained from the annual lists of shop stewards from 1983 to 1989 kept by the branch. A number of tables were extracted from the annual lists of shop stewards, which are provided later in this section. This information provided a picture of the patterns of organisation

and shop steward turnover in each department. A brief summary of each department is given below.

Administration and Legal

This department had a reasonable degree of continuity, during the period studied. It had six male shop stewards and nine female shop stewards. Of the male shop stewards two had served over seven years as a steward, three served for two years and one for one year. Average length of membership for male stewards was 3.5 years. Of the nine women, three were new stewards who had served one year, two had been stewards for two years, one for three, two for four and one for five years. Thus the women's average length of office-holding was 2.5 years. The overall average length of service was 2.9 years as a steward. The two chief shop stewards in this department were male.

Arts Department

This was a small department which had a shop steward in some but not all of the years for which information was available. It had had one male chief shop steward who served as a steward for two years and one female chief shop steward, who served as a steward for four years. The small size of this department appeared to be a factor making for difficulties in union organisation.

Central Policy Unit/ Chief Executive's Department

This department had little continuity of union office-holding. A high level of shop steward turnover in this department may be related to

high levels of staff turnover generally. No shop steward here had held office for more than two years. Three male stewards had all served for one year. Of the four female stewards three served for two years, and one retired as a steward at the end of the first year of the period surveyed. Average length of service as a shop steward here was 1.4 years.

City Treasury

This department had very few female stewards. Three were identified over the period surveyed compared to eighteen male stewards. Of these eighteen men, eight served for one year, four for two years, two served their last year in the first year surveyed, and one each served for three, four, five and over seven years. The average length of service for male stewards was two years. The three women stewards had relatively longer periods of service, two serving for three years and one for four years, with an average length of service of 3.3 years. Overall average length of service here was 2.2 years. One chief shop steward (male) was identified from the records. Subsequently the departmental shop stewards committee decided not to have a chief shop steward (see interview in 7.4.h).

Cleansing

The Cleansing department had a small number of shop stewards, with a moderate degree of continuity. There were five male shop stewards, two serving for one year and three for three years. So the average length of service for male stewards was 2.2 years. The chief shop

steward (male) served for three years. Of the two women stewards one served for four years and one for one year, so their average length of service was 2.5 years.

Design and Building Services (formerly Planning and Design)

In this department over the time surveyed there had been twenty-seven male stewards, of whom nine held office for one year, thirteen for two years, two for three years, one for four years, one for five years and one for seven years, with an average length of service of 1.7 years. There were six female stewards, of whom five held office for one year and one for two years, average length of service being 1.2 years. The overall average period of service as a steward was 1.6 years. There was thus a high level of turnover of shop stewards and little continuity.

Education (Central Campus)

The Central Campus part of the Education Department covered administrative staff based in offices near the Town Hall and the Careers Service. Most of these workers worked in a reasonable geographical proximity to each other. This department appeared over the time studied to have had forty male stewards and twenty female stewards, although women were a majority of the staff in the department. Of the forty male stewards, twenty nine served for one year, seven for two years, two for three years, one for five and one for over seven years. The average length of service for male stewards was 1.5 years. Of the twenty female stewards, eight served for one

year, eight for two years and one for four years, two for five years and one for over six years. The average length of service for female stewards was 2.2 years. Thus the women had a lower turnover rate than the men. The overall average length of service was 1.8 years. During this period the department had three female chief shop stewards, supporting the theory that female union leaders are more likely to emerge in predominantly female work groups.

Education (Schools and Colleges)

This department covered education administration staff based in schools and colleges across the city. Many of these in schools worked in very small workgroups, sometimes being the only NALGO member in a school. This was a department which had a high degree of turnover for both male and female stewards. Interviews suggested this related to pressures where stewards were in isolated work situations. Of the seventeen male stewards, eight served for one year and five for two years, so the average length of service for men was 2.1 years. This department had twenty-eight female shop stewards. Of these thirteen served for one year, six for two years, three for three years, four for four years and two for five years. The average length of service for women was 2.1 years, i.e. there was no gender difference in rates of turnover. In terms of chief shop steward, one woman had held this position for four years.

Employment (later DEED: Department of Employment and Economic Development)

This department had a fairly high degree of turnover, partly related to changes in jobs. Twelve male stewards were identified in the period studied, of whom two later became branch officers. Of the male stewards five held office for one year, six for at least two years and one for three years. So the average length of office as a steward for men was 1.7 years. Of the five female stewards four held office for one year, and one for two years, so the average length of service for women was 1.2 years. The overall average length of service was 1.5 years. During this time there had been one female chief shop steward for a year.

Environmental Health (later Health and Consumer Services)

This department appeared to have a low rate of shop steward turnover. There were twelve male stewards, seven of whom had served for two years, two for one year, two for three years and one for four years, with an average length of service of 2.2 years. Of the four female stewards, one had served for one year, one for two years and two for four years, so the women's average length of service was 2.8 years. The overall average was 2.3 years. During this period a woman held the office of chief shop steward for four years.

Family and Community Services

The records showed fifty-two male stewards in all. Of these twenty-six held office for one year, fifteen for two years, four for three

years, three for four years, two for five years, one for six years and one for over seven years, the average length of service for men being 2 years. There were thirty-six female stewards, of whom twenty-two held office for one year, seven for two years, four for three years, one for four years, one for five years and one for seven years, average length of service being 1.8 years. The overall average length of service was 1.9 years. One of the longer serving female stewards had been chief shop steward.

Housing

The Housing department had a high rate of shop steward turnover for both sexes. In this department in the mid eighties there was a division between executive and non-executive stewards clearly signalled in the records. There were sixty-six male stewards, of whom thirty nine held office for one year, nineteen for two years, three for three years, two for four years and three for five years, average length of service being 1.7 years. There were twenty-nine female stewards, of whom eighteen held office for one year, six for two years, three for three years, one for four years and one for six years, average length of service was 1.7 years. There was no gender difference in average length of service as a shop steward.

Land and Planning

This department had one of the lowest turnover rates. There had been thirteen male stewards, of whom five served for one year, one for two years, two for three years, two for four years, two for five years and

one for over seven years. Thus the men's average period of service was 2.9 years. There were three female stewards, of whom one served for three years, and the other two each for one year, giving an average of 1.7 years.

Libraries

This was a small department which appeared to have an intermediate turnover rate and a majority of women stewards. There were twelve male stewards, of whom seven held office for one year, two for two years and one each for four, five and six years, the average length of service being 2.2 years. There were twenty-one female stewards, of whom eleven held office for one year, eight for two years, one for three years, and one for six years, average length of service being 1.7 years. The overall average period of service was 1.9 years.

Museums

This was a small department, rather similar to the Arts Department. There was one male steward who served for two years, and three female stewards each of whom served for one year.

Personnel

This was a department with few stewards, none in some years, partly because of the nature of the work in the department, which made it difficult for employees here to take on a union representative role, when they might be meeting union representatives on the other side of the table as representatives of the Personnel Department. Five male

stewards were identified, four of whom held office for one year and one for two years, average length of service being 1.2 years. No female stewards were identified.

Polytechnic

This was a department with a fairly stable pattern of union organisation. There were twelve male stewards, of whom five held office for one year, three for two years, and one each for three, four, six and seven years, average length of service being 2.9 years. There were also twelve women stewards in this period, of whom three held office for one year, five for two years, two for three years, one for four years and one for five years, average length of service being 2.3 years. The overall average was 2.5 years.

Recreation

This was a fairly small department, which had been affected by job losses. From the records there were nine male stewards, of whom four held office for one year, one each for three, five and six years, and two for seven years, with an average of 3.6 years. There were two female stewards, one of whom held office for four years and one for six years. The overall average length of service was 3.8 years. This was the department with the lowest turnover rate.

Works

In this department there had been twenty-two male stewards, of whom eight held office for one year, five for two years, eight for three

years and one for five years, with an average length of service as a steward of 2.1 years. There were three female stewards with an average length of service of two years.

What is most striking about these figures is the way continuity of union culture and expertise in a department depended on a minority of stewards who stayed in office for several years. The great majority of stewards served for one or two years and then resigned as union representatives.

Table 52 shows the rates of turnover in descending order. The issue of shop steward turnover is important for unions as collective organisations, given the costs invested in shop steward training and the time it takes to acquire expertise as a union representative. There is no strikingly obvious explanation of different departmental rates of shop steward turnover. In terms of gender proportions in the department, while predominantly male departments (Recreation, Works, Cleansing and Environmental Health) tended to be below average in rates of turnover, gender-balanced and predominantly-female departments (Administration and Legal, Housing, Education, Treasury, Polytechnic, Education, F&CS and Libraries) fell on both sides of the average rate of turnover. Moreover it should be borne in mind that when looking at the rate of turnover of shop stewards by sex (5.4.e and Table 52) there was no overall difference in rates of turnover between women and men.

Table 52: Rates of Shop Steward Turnover by Department and Sex

	Average Number of Years as a Shop Steward		
	M	F	All
Department			
Recreation	3.6	5.0	3.8
Admin and Legal	3.5	2.5	2.9
Land and Planning	2.9	1.7	2.7
Polytechnic	2.9	2.3	2.5
Cleansing	2.2	2.5	2.3
Environmental Health	2.2	2.8	2.3
Treasury	2.0	3.3	2.2
Education (Schools and Colleges)	2.1	2.1	2.1
Works	2.1	2.0	2.1
Family and Community Services	2.0	1.8	1.9
Libraries	2.2	1.7	1.9
Education (Central Campus)	1.5	2.2	1.8
Housing	1.7	1.7	1.7
Design and Building Services	1.7	1.2	1.6
Employment	1.7	1.2	1.5
Central Policy Unit	1.0	1.8	1.4
Overall Averages	2.0	2.0	2.0

If work-related factors factors are taken into account, it is the case that the two departments where workers were likely to encounter the highest levels of occupational stress (F&CS and Housing) were the departments with rates of turnover which were slightly higher than average. These were also departments where the work content was

likely to promote high levels of social awareness, as dicussed in 7.2.c. Nonetheless other material on these departments, especially from interviews, suggests that they were viewed within the branch as well organised departments, despite their marginally higher than average rates of shop steward turnover.

In terms of union-related factors it is not always clear whether high shop steward turnover rates should be interpreted as evidence of lack of continuity of representation, arising from the personal pressures of being a shop steward, or a sign of a healthy and democratic union structure in which there are plenty of candidates for posts. Interviews did not suggest a high level of competition for posts, although a few ex-shop stewards did comment that they had felt it was easier to stand down because there was someone else prepared to take on the role. Moreover the shop stewards' lists suggest that some constituencies were unfilled, given the variation in total numbers of stewards over the years. Similarly low turnover rates may indicate stability and continuity or a degree of stagnation of union organisation. It appeared that the departments which were the most activist tended to have slightly above average turnover rates. In one sense this is not surprising since shop stewards in these departments tended to put in more hours on union work, so that being a shop steward in these departments placed more demands on the individual in terms of time and mental energy.

Table 53: Figures from Annual Lists of Shop Stewards

1983/84	M	F	Total
Administration and Legal	4	1	5
Arts	1	0	1
Central Policy Unit	0	2	2
City Treasury	5	3	8
Cleansing	2	0	2
Education Central Campus	10	6	16
Education (Schools & Colleges)	3	5	8
Employment	1	1	2
Environmental Health	5	1	6
Estates Surveyors	5	0	5
Family and Community Services	18	12	30
Housing	21	7	28
Libraries	5	4	9
Markets	1	0	1
Museums	0	1	1
Personnel	1	0	1
Planning and Design	8	2	10
Polytechnic	4	2	6
Polytechnic Students Union	1	2	3
Recreation	4	0	4
Works	7	0	7
Totals	106(68%)	49(32%)	155

(N = 155)

Branch Officers	7	4	11

Table 53: Figures from Annual Lists of Shop Stewards (continued)

	M	F	Total
1984/85			
Administration and Legal	3	3	6
Arts	2	1	3
City Treasury	5	4	9
Central Policy Unit	0	1	1
Cleansing	2	0	2
Design and Building	4	2	6
Education (Schools and Colleges)	3	13	16
Education Central Campus	6	10	16
Employment	4	2	6
Environmental Health	6	1	7
Estates Surveyors	4	0	4
Family and Community Services	18	11	29
Housing	17	13	30
Libraries	2	8	10
Land and Planning	6	0	6
Polytechnic	5	5	10
Polytechnic Students Union	1	0	1
Recreation	5	1	6
Works	6	0	6
Totals	99(57%)	75(43%)	174

(N = 174)

Branch Officers	8	4	12

Table 53: Figures from Annual Lists of Shop Stewards (continued)

	M	F	Total
1985/96			
Administration & Legal	3	4	7
Arts	0	1	1
City Treasury	6	2	8
Central Policy Unit	1	1	2
Cleansing	2	0	2
Design and Building Services	7	1	8
Education (Central Campus)	6	8	14
Education (Schools and Colleges)	6	12	18
Employment	2	1	3
Environmental Health	4	2	6
Family and Community Services	17	12	29
Housing	19	10	29
Land and Planning	7	0	7
Libraries	4	6	10
Personnel	1	0	0
Polytechnic	4	4	8
Recreation	5	1	6
Works	6	0	6
Totals	100 (61%)	65 (39%)	165
Branch Officers	7	3	10
1985/6 External Departments			
Consumer Protection	2	0	2
Fire	0	1	1
Police	4	5	9
Probation	1	1	2
Traffic Wardens	2	1	3
Totals	9	8	17
1985/6 Totals (including external departments)	109 (60%)	73 (40%)	182

(N = 182)

Table 53: Figures from Annual Lists of Shop Stewards (continued)

1986/87	M	F	Total
Administration & Legal	2	5	7
Arts	0	1	1
City Treasury	5	1	6
Central Policy Unit	1	2	3
Cleansing	1	1	2
Design and Building Services	11	1	12
Education (Central Campus)	11	9	20
Education (Schools and Colleges)	10	10	20
Employment	3	1	4
Environmental Health	5	2	7
Family and Community Services	16	10	26
Fire	1	1	2
Housing	14	6	20
Land and Planning	7	0	7
Libraries	5	6	11
Museums	1	1	2
Personnel	1	0	1
Police	4	4	8
Polytechnic	4	3	7
Polytechnic Students Union	1	0	1
Probation	2	1	3
Recreation	5	2	7
Works	8	2	10
Total	118(63%)	69(37%)	187
Branch Officers	6	2	8

(N = 187)

Table 53: Figures from Annual Lists of Shop Stewards (continued)

1987/88	M	F	Total
Administration and Legal	5	2	7
Arts	0	1	1
City Treasury	4	1	5
Central Policy	2	0	2
Cleansing	2	2	4
Design and Building Services	10	1	11
Education (Central Campus)	12	8	20
Education (Schools and Colleges)	8	8	16
Employment	4	1	5
Environmental Health	4	2	6
Family and Community Services	19	7	26
Fire	1	0	1
Housing	13	7	20
Land and Planning	8	0	8
Libraries	6	4	10
Museums	1	0	1
Personnel	3	0	3
Police	5	1	6
Polytechnic	5	5	10
Probation	1	0	1
Recreation	4	2	6
Traffic Wardens	0	1	1
Works	11	2	13
Totals	136(71%)	55(29%)	191

(N = 191)

Table 53: Figures from Annual Lists of Shop Stewards (continued)

1988/89	M	F	Total
Administration and Legal	4	2	6
City Treasury	6	0	6
Cleansing	2	1	3
Design and Building Services	7	1	8
Education (Central Campus)	11	2	13
Education (Schools and Colleges)	5	8	13
Employment	3	1	4
Family and Community Services	10	6	16
Fire	1	0	1
Health and Consumer Services	2	1	3
Housing	13	3	16
Land and Planning	10	0	10
Libraries	3	5	8
Museums	0	1	1
Police	1	0	1
Polytechnic	7	4	11
Probation	1	0	1
Recreation	6	0	6
Works	12	0	12
Total	104 (75%)	35 (25%)	139
Branch Officers	8	3	11

(N = 139)

Table 53: Figures from Annual Lists of Shop Stewards (continued)

	M	F	Total
1989/90			
Administration and Legal	3	4	7
Chief Executive	1	0	1
City Treasury	7	1	8
Cleansing	1	1	2
DEED	3	1	4
Design and Building Services	7	0	7
Education (Central Campus)	7	4	11
Education (Schools and Colleges)	3	4	7
Family and Community Services	8	7	15
Health and Consumer Services	4	2	6
Housing	10	4	14
Land and Planning	5	3	8
Libraries	1	5	6
Police	2	1	3
Polytechnic	4	3	7
Probation	3	0	3
Recreation	6	1	7
Traffic Wardens	0	1	1
Works	10	0	10
Totals	85 (67%)	42 (33%)	127
Branch Officers	6	3	9

(N = 127)

7.4.g Department and Women's Representation within NALGO

The branch annual lists of shop stewards demonstrate the continuing under-representation of women in union office-holding even in predominantly female departments, such as Education and F&CS. A number of writers on women's union participation (e.g. Wertheimer and Nelson 1975, Cobble 1990, Ledwith et al. 1990) have argued that the higher the percentage of women members is, the more likely women are to participate in proportion to their numbers in the union. Wertheimer and Nelson, for example, write:-

"The evidence is that where women constitute a large proportion of union membership, their participation is judged to be higher than where they are heavily outnumbered."
(Wertheimer and Nelson op. cit. p. 26)

Looking at the annual lists of shop stewards (Table 53) for the Education Department, the department with the largest number and highest proportion of women workers, it can be seen that the balance of male and female stewards changed from year to year. In some years there was a majority of female stewards, in same a majority of male stewards. Thus while the gender proportion factor may have contributed to bringing more women forward to take on union office, this factor did not produce a majority of women every year. In the female-dominated department of F&CS women stewards were in a minority in each year surveyed. Nonetheless when both of these departments are compared with some of the gender-balanced or male-dominated departments they still did produce more women representatives and the gender inequalities in representation were not so sharp. For

instance the gender balanced department of the City Treasury showed a continuing and often marked under-representation of women as stewards, while in Works there were no women shop stewards in most years. In interviews two branch officers (one male and one female) noted how women branch officers tended to come from departments such as F&CS and Housing. This was explained not only in terms of the number of women in these departments, but also the number of women in senior posts in these departments. In short they were arguing that women's occupation of a leadership role was aceepted within the departmental culture. Interestingly Wertheimer and Nelson note that women are more likely to be interested in union work and willing to take on office when they see themselves as having prospects of advancement at work (Wertheimer and Nelson 1975 P 118). They also discuss the importance of role models to encourage women's union participation, a factor remarked upon by some interviewees (see 5.4.h). It is likely that the role model factor for many women office-holders was important initially at the departmental level, since this was the level where most activists gained experience of union work before proceeding to hold a post on the branch committee.

Departmental cultures may contain not only norms about the acceptability for women to take on leadership posts and positions of responsibility, but also attitudes towards gender roles in the wider society. In departments in which there was a strong commitment to equal opportunities and a degree of acceptance of feminism as a political theory, it may have been easier for women to become active

trade unionists. Women in such departments would not be constrained by a cult of femininity in which union activism or militancy was seen as unfeminine. It is likely that women in more 'radical' departments, such as F&CS, were more likely to receive support for union activism, than women in departments like Education, where attitudes towards gender roles were rather more traditional (see chapter 5.4.a).

Another aspects of the departmental union culture which affected female representation was the degree of support provided by departmental shop stewards' committees for the induction and training of new stewards. While this is of course of great benefit to all stewards, women particularly may benefit, if they are likely to be held back from taking union office because of lack of confidence in their abilities, a trend noted by Wertheimer and Nelson among their personal-societal-cultural barriers to participation. For instance one female branch officer, who had been a shop steward in F&CS, described the help the system of support there gave to new stewards.

"F&CS has got to be one of the best organised departments in the branch. They have a very active shop stewards' committee. It's very supportive to new shop stewards. The shop stewards' committee always has an introduction day for new shop stewards to introduce them to the current issues in the department. It's a reasonably large department and they pair up new and experienced stewards to work together, so that the new stewards can learn from others' experience. I think for me the advantage of starting as a shop steward in a department like that was that you were able to get support. I am sure that people who come through that shop steward system are more confident and more able in a lot of ways."
(Shop steward)

7.4.h The Operation of Departmental Shop Stewards' Committees

Interviews were often started by asking informants how the shop stewards' committee worked in their department. This was chosen partly as an easy and non-threatening question to start off the interview, but also because the operation of departmental shop stewards' committee was an issue which was not easy to explore in depth in the questionnaire study. Answers to this question often covered both factual information on the operation of departmental shop stewards' committees and also respondents' views on how they should operate. These discussions often led to discussion of wider views about the role of trade unions.

The first noticeable difference in these replies related to the frequency of shop stewards' meetings. In some departments, such as F&CS, interviewees stated clearly that the shop stewards' committee met every Wednesday morning, often with an agenda covering many items. In other departments the shop stewards' committee tended to meet less often, sometimes intermittently. In Education (Central Campus), Polytechnic and Treasury the meetings were fortnightly, and in Employment monthly. Shop stewards in F&CS saw the weekly meeting as important in allocating union work and keeping the union well-organised. The NALGO meetings which shop stewards viewed as valuable and important to attend were the constituency meetings with their members and the departmental shop stewards' committee meetings. These

were clearly seen as more important than the branch committee, which was less well attended.

The second noticeable difference between departments which emerged in interviews with shop stewards and especially branch officers was that some shop stewards' committees played more of a negotiating role and were more self-sufficient from the branch than others. This was especially so in the cases of F&CS and Housing. Some of these differences have already been discussed in the history of the introduction of the shop steward system in the Sheffield NALGO branch (chapter 2.4.d). There was a definite perspective that some departments were better organised than others, although most chief shop stewards seemed to view their own department as well organised. Among the departments frequently mentioned as well-organised were F&CS and Housing, although they were also sometimes viewed as being too radical. One ex-branch officer compared his experience of union activism in the departments of Museums and Housing. He had been involved in representing members in Museums when they had a dispute. He found they could be quite militant when faced with an external threat, like members in Education and the Polytechnic, but were not militant and "politically motivated" or "socially aware" like members in the Housing Department. Thus branch officers clearly identified some departments, especially smaller departments, like Arts and Museums, as being more in need of support from branch officers than the better-organised departments. For instance the Service Conditions Officer, a branch officer whose union work was concerned with local

negotiations and representation related to matters of conditions of service, stated:-

"In theory, when the shop steward system was started, shop stewards were supposed to deal with grievances, disciplinaries and appeals on regradings, up to the level of the department. So as long as the problem was kept in the department, then branch officers weren't supposed to come in, although they could be drawn upon for advice. When the issue couldn't be resolved in the department, that was the time that branch officers were supposed to get involved. In theory the branch officers were supposed to concentrate their activities on matters which affected the branch, e.g. if the Council wanted to merge two departments. In reality it doesn't work like that. In departments which have a fairly active shop stewards' committee and reasonably good shop stewards, then they'll work like the actual model. In other departments, like, for example, Education (Schools and Colleges) then you'll find that branch officers are dealing with basic grievances, which in theory they shouldn't be dealing with. The Service Conditions Officer gets involved in dealing with issues which are important to the individual members concerned, but which are minor problems from the point of view of the branch."
(Service Conditions Officer)

He noted that where departmental shop stewards were inexperienced or lacked confidence they were much more likely to seek advice by telephone from the branch officers than attempt to sort out problems themselves. Some officers did, however, regret the fact that some departments went as far as the brink of strike action before involving branch officers.

The importance of continuity for establishing effective union representation was stressed by one of the shop stewards in Land and Planning:-

"I think Land and Planning is recognised as one of the places where the union is well represented. There are some departments where stewards sort of come and go, year by year, but there's really no continuing tradition, whereas in Land and Planning there is. There's

basically a strong core of union representation which had continued over the years."
(Shop steward, Land and Planning)

A third noticeable difference was in relation to the role of chief shop steward. The chief shop steward played a role in leading the departmental shop stewards in negotiations with management and organising the meetings of the shop stewards' committee. As mentioned previously the facilities agreements provided for chief shop stewards to receive three days a week off for union work. This recognised the amount of work associated with the post. One chief shop steward stated that he spent 75% of his time on union work. Most departments but not all had a chief shop steward. Two departments which had chosen not to have a chief shop steward were Housing and Treasury. In Housing this was a conscious political choice because there was a fear that a chief shop steward might spend too much time talking to managers and become incorporated into management. The absence of a chief shop steward was therefore seen as more democratic and a guarantee against bureaucratisation. One shop steward in Housing explained their position as follows:-

"We don't have a chief shop steward. We voted in principle not to have one, because that tends to mean that management will call that individual in all the time, whenever there is something they want to discuss. A chief shop steward has facility time of three days a week, so in effect that's a convenor, almost an official kind of role, rather than being based in the workplace, which we think is important. We think it important both for representation of members and also for not just letting things all go through one person. It's much better to make management deal with a fair number of stewards at any one time."
(Shop steward, Housing)

In the case of the Treasury department the decision not to have a chief shop steward had been taken after one individual who had filled the position had lost touch with the members. As one informant put it:-

"We had a person that was chief shop steward who basically went rogue on us, and we had a great deal of difficulty extracting ourselves from the mess that he made. So we decided that rather than have one person attending meetings with management all the time and actually getting in a relationship with management that is not conducive to trade union activities, we would not have a chief shop steward any more, so that what we had was a shop stewards' co-ordinator."
(Shop steward in Treasury)

The annual lists of shop stewards also identified the chief shop steward (CSS) for the department. They showed remakable continuity in some departments and rapid turnover of CSS in others. For instance in the City Treasury, Design and Building Services, Education (Schools and Colleges), Polytechnic and Recreation there had been the same CSS for five years, whereas in Central Policy Unit, Employment and Environmental Health there had been a change of CSS every year. In some departments shop stewards tended to serve for one or two years (Arts, Cleansing, Education Central Campus, Libraries and Works). In both Administration and Legal and Family and Community Services the same steward had held the post of CSS for four years.

7.5 Conclusion: the Importance of the Departmental Factor

As already noted the departmental level of union participation in a large branch is important for members. It is the level where day-to-

day problems are raised and often dealt with. Office-holding at the shop steward level in the department is the first rung of union participation, from which it is possible to advance to other union posts. The role of shop stewards' committee in encouraging, training and supporting new shop stewards is vital for the development of union activists. It is firstly in the departmental shop stewards' committees that the influence of union-related factors on union participation can be best studied.

The study of the departmental factor reported in this research indicates that there were substantial inter-departmental differences in work and union cultures, rates of shop steward turnover and the functioning of shop stewards' committees. These variations indicate that unions as voluntary organisations are not simply passive recipients of the forces associated with external factors, such as work and gender roles, but that the local pattern of union organisation can make a difference to the levels of participation and effectiveness of union representation, a point indicated by Cockburn (1991) in her account of the Northern Ireland district of a trade union.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

The conclusion will first summarise the main results of the research and then discuss the policy implications of the research. The principal research findings include the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches to explaining union participation; reasons for the under-representation of women in union office-holding; the importance of union facility agreements for women's representation in trade unions; and the role of departmental cultures and departmental shop stewards' committees in promoting union activism. The policy implications to be discussed include ways in which trade unions can promote membership participation, and the involvement and more equal representation of women members. Finally further directions for academic research in this field are considered.

8.1 Summary of Research Findings

In considering approaches to union participation it was remarked that researchers have in the past often looked at **reasons for** union participation in the case of men and **obstacles to** union participation in the case of women. Thus a different problem for sociological explanation was identified according to the sex of the workers being studied. This may indicate a serious flaw in research strategy, which a feminist perspective should correct. The study of union participation should not start from an

assumption that women always have lower levels of union participation than men, and should avoid the twin dangers of ignoring the influence of men's gender roles and women's work roles on union participation (Feldberg and Glenn 1979). This research project has attempted to build on past studies of women's union participation without starting from an assumption that women have lower levels of participation than men or tend 'naturally' to be less active in unions. Even if this approach were justified in the past, it can be argued that in the context of changes in women's position in trade unions in the 1980s it is no longer appropriate. It should always be kept in mind that union activism, outside exceptional periods, is a minority activity for both male and female workers. The categories of **work-related, societal-cultural-personal** and **union-related** which Wertheimer and Nelson (1975) proposed for the investigation of barriers to union participation have been employed in this study to examine reasons for participation as well as obstacles to it. An adequate sociological explanation of union participation needs to encompass reasons for participation as well as obstacles to participation. Tackling barriers to participation, such as responsibility for housework and childcare or requirements to work overtime, is necessary as part of a union strategy to increase participation, but it is not sufficient. The creation of more free time for union members makes union participation possible, but it does not guarantee that extra time will be used for union activity rather than any other activity which

individuals may prefer. Unions need to provide members with positive reasons for participation, and researchers need to investigate union participation in terms of motivators as well as obstacles.

This is not to deny the very real nature of obstacles to union activism for some women, arising either from their work or family situation or discrimination within the union, but an adequate theory of union participation cannot be based solely on a study of barriers to participation; it needs to address reasons for participation. This is not as difficult as it may appear. The three categories, work-related, family-societal-cultural and union-related, can also be used as means to explore reasons for participation. Indeed the stimulus to this research arose partly from recognition that unions were trying to take positive action to improve female representation within the unions, as well as an interest in whether positive action in employment could also promote women's union involvement. Thus it appeared that both work-related and union-related factors could be important as motivators for participation. During the research one case where societal-cultural-personal factors had facilitated union activism was identified. For the nursery nurses the way their feminine gender role was used to intensify their disadvantaged position as workers was important as a stimulus to take action. The fact that they felt under criticism both as workers and as women when

taking industrial action had not defused their militancy, but rather strengthened it.

The research findings suggest that the importance of work-related factors in explaining union participation applies for both women and men. Where workers are employed in jobs which promote awareness of social problems and which develop relevant skills for union work, such as the ability to negotiate and familiarity with how formal meetings are conducted, this can encourage union activism among both male and female workers. This confirms the findings of previous studies on trade unionism among social workers (Joyce, Corrigan and Hayes 1988), but extends this analysis to other occupations in local government such as housing management and planning.

When examining the relationship between women's work and their union participation, this study also illustrates the difficulties that some jobs presented for union activism. These jobs, such as nursery nurse, secretary and counter clerk, which were done predominantly by women, made union activism difficult chiefly because of the inflexibility of the work routines. These were also jobs which did not necessarily produce the social awareness or skills which promoted union activism. In these jobs it was frequently not possible to leave the job instantly to attend a union meeting or to see a constituent, even though the union facilities agreement permitted shop stewards to take as much time

as reasonably necessary for union work. The significance of these job-related constraints on union activism suggests that part of the explanation for women's under-representation in union office-holding lies in occupational factors. In Feldberg and Glenn's (1979) terminology it is the job model rather than the gender model which needs to be considered first. Moreover posts at more senior levels in local government, such as those at senior officer and principal officer grade, allowed the employee more autonomy in the work situation and therefore made union activism easier because work could be deferred and rescheduled to fit in with union activities. Far more male than female shop stewards were employed on these higher grades. The point at which gender factors came into operation was that women were more likely to express feelings of guilt than men were about leaving their job to do union work. This experience of guilt needs to be explained both in terms of socialization into the feminine gender role and also their typically lower occupational status.

The significance of work-related factors in influencing levels of union activism can also be seen in the operation of union facilities agreements. The research showed (see Table 39, page 215) that male shop stewards did more of their union work in work time than female shop stewards did. This meant that the union facilities agreements were working better for male shop stewards, chiefly because of the greater flexibility of their jobs. Several interviewees commented on the need for cover for union

work to make it feasible for workers in some jobs, such as typist and social worker, to take the facility time they were entitled to. The awareness of this issue, and particularly the linking of the problems of cover and under-representation of women in union office-holding, is evidence of the progress that was made in raising consciousness of equality issues in trade unions in the 1980s.

Towards the end of the research project proposals for the merger of NALGO with COHSE and NUPE were being developed at national union level. The new merged union would be one with a predominantly female membership and with equality issues as a major part of the union agenda for future action (Coote 1992). NALGO's contribution to this agenda would be well developed equality policies and a tradition of lay officers being involved in negotiations, which had produced a cadre of experienced women union activists. The discussion of where equality issues fit into a union's overall agenda raises the problem of similarities and differences in men's and women's trade union involvement, bargaining priorities and union cultures. Before unions move to adopt different bargaining priorities and styles of organising in order to recruit and involve more female members, the issue should be explored of whether and to what extent women and men do have different priorities for union work. Trade unions in responding to the challenge of feminism and in recognising the diversity of their membership have to find a balance between work

on issues which involve all members and attention to sectional interests within unions. This research project found very little difference in bargaining priorities between male and female shop stewards. For both sexes the issue of higher pay for low paid workers was the principal bargaining priority, an issue which covered both class and gender concerns. Where differences were identified with respect to collective bargaining, these lay not in bargaining priorities, but in styles of bargaining. Thus as a tentative conclusion to an ongoing debate among industrial relations theorists about gender differences in collective bargaining, I would suggest that the gender differences may lie more in styles of bargaining than in bargaining priorities.

This difference in styles of bargaining relates to the issue of gender differences in union cultures. Writers such as Milkman (1985), Feldberg (1987), Cockburn (1991) and Faue (1991) have suggested that women have a different union culture from that of men and respond to different union organising strategies. In this research project this was clearly the case in respect of the meetings held in the nursery nurses' regrading campaign. In considering the relationship between union culture and women's level of union participation, it is important to keep in mind the possible importance of occupational status divisions among women. There is a need to investigate whether women at all levels in the occupational structure find traditional union cultures alienating and prefer alternative ways of organising. It appeared from the

interviews conducted in my research that women in professional jobs may be more comfortable than other women with participating in formal union meetings, because their work experience has to some degree emancipated them from the traditional feminine gender role and has equipped them with the requisite social skills. Thus gender differences in preferred styles of union organising may be a more significant issue for women lower down the occupational structure.

Variations in support for female union activism, as indeed in general acceptance of equality issues, were found in different departmental cultures. While local government culture in general, compared to the culture of private sector businesses, may be supportive of women's equality (Cockburn 1991), there were also noticeable variations within Council departments. In those departments where more women were in senior jobs and there was a more radical culture, such as F&CS and Housing, it was easier for women to be openly feminist, without encountering social ostracism. This situation enabled women to be more assertive in various aspects of their working lives, including union activism.

The research indicates that the departmental factor in union activism is important and merits further study. For many shop stewards in this study the departmental level was the significant level of union activism. It was in the departmental shop stewards' committees, when they functioned well, that day-to-day

problems of representing members were discussed and where much informal union training occurred. Where departmental shop stewards' committees were operating effectively they provided important support for union activists and probably did much to contribute to the survival of trade unionism in a difficult climate. In this study it appeared that trade unionism in local government had not merely survived through the 1980s, but had also achieved some worthwhile successes, such as regradings of groups of workers and a new technology agreement. In 1989 NALGO had held its first national strike, which had contributed to the defence of national conditions of service. Moreover branch life, and to an even greater extent union life at departmental level, was in some areas lively and vigorous, with frequent political debates among members and the periodic recruitment of new union office-holders.

8.2 The Policy Implications of the Research

8.2.a Union Participation and Representation

Two clear factors stand out which promote women's participation and representation in trade unions. The question of women's position in trade unions is likely to continue to be a matter of debate in the context of the merger of NUPE, COHSE and NALGO. The first factor is affirmative action in employment, so that as

more women move into higher status jobs, which give more flexibility in organising work time, it becomes easier for them to encounter chief executives and senior managers on an equal basis in negotiations. This is important in terms of the job-related factors affecting union activism; higher occupational status may also diminish gender-role-related obstacles to union activism, since higher income allows women more financial independence and choice of lifestyle, and employment at more senior levels may promote self-confidence and social skills useful for union activism.

The second factor is the importance of trade union facilities agreements. The possible role of union facilities agreements in promoting female representation in unions was identified in the study of NUPE by Fryer et al. (1978). Informants repeatedly commented on the problem of the lack of cover for jobs which would have made it possible to take facility time. Obviously cover for shop stewards when doing union work is not likely to be provided while local government faces severe financial problems in raising sufficient revenue to provide services and to meet existing financial obligations. Many informants recognised this difficulty, but still saw the provision of cover as a long-term union objective. For some workers in some jobs, such as secretary and counter clerk, which are jobs disproportionately performed by women, cover is essential. Clearly this is an issue which should be high on the trade union bargaining agenda if

economic circumstances improve. Often it is difficult for union activists to prioritise better facilities agreements in collective bargaining, because of a moralistic service ethic in voluntary organisations and the feeling that this is being selfish in prioritising a claim which chiefly concerns union office-holders rather than the membership as a whole. Nonetheless for unions to function as collective organisations and to be in a position to benefit their members, facility time, with cover where necessary, is important and should be prioritised more in collective bargaining. This is important for unions as an issue of both union democracy and equal opportunities, since it relates to both the right of the members to elect whoever they wish and the right of all members to stand for office, irrespective of occupation and gender.

8.2.b Directions for Future Research

There has been a surprising absence of research on women trade unionists given the growth of feminist research in many areas in recent years. Trade unions are a major part of the voluntary sector of organisations and literature on equal opportunities (Cockburn 1991) is beginning to recognise the importance of equality in the voluntary sector for equality in employment generally.

Thus study of women's position in trade unions should include recognition of the way progress towards greater equality in employment and in trade unions can be mutually supporting. The research reported in this study possesses the usual strengths and limitations of a field study of one union, which has concentrated on union office-holders. There is a case for further studies of gender and trade unions, and in different employment sectors. Such research may investigate matters such as gender and trade union bargaining priorities; the operation of trade union facilities agreements; gender and workplace/union cultures; and the departmental level of union organisation. Moreover if more organisations develop equal opportunities policies and take the responsibility of being an equal opportunity employer seriously, then there is the issue of how far do affirmative action strategies in employment promote greater equality for women in trade unions and vice versa.

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APPENDIX I SUMMARY OF RESEARCH WORK

Access Negotiations

Negotiations with the Sheffield NALGO Local Government Branch Officers for initial approval of a research project on shop stewards were started in Summer 1985.
Preliminary approval for the project was granted by the Branch Executive in July 1985.

Pilot Questionnaire

Approval for the pilot questionnaire stage was granted in October 1986.
Seven pilot questionnaires were sent out on 28 November 1986. Six were returned within four weeks of distribution.

Questionnaire Survey

The final version of the questionnaire was approved by the Branch Executive on 2 July 1987.
Questionnaires were sent out at the end of July 1987 to all shop stewards in the branch via the branch mailing to shop stewards.
26 questionnaires were returned by 11 August 1987.
50 questionnaires were returned by 22 September 1987.
Reminder letters were sent out via the branch mailing to shop stewards in the week of 23 September 1987.
The last questionnaire (number 64) was returned in Summer 1989.

Computer Analysis

Computer analysis of questionnaires was carried out from 1987 to 1989.

Interview Survey

Interviews were arranged by two methods: by contacting informants who had returned the questionnaire, indicating that they were prepared to be interviewed, and by approaching branch officers directly. The interviewees were selected so that an equal number of men and women were interviewed.
Twenty-four interviews were conducted from Autumn 1989 to Spring 1990.
Transcription of interviews was completed by the end of April 1990.

Branch Records Study

Analysis of shop stewards' lists from 1983 to 1989 was conducted in Summer 1990. The analysis focused on rates of shop steward turnover, gender balance of shop stewards, and departmental variations in patterns of union organisation.

SHEFFIELD CITY POLYTECHNIC

SURVEY OF SHOP STEWARDS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

NOTES ON ANSWERING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

CONFIDENTIALITY

All replies will be treated as confidential and no reporting or writing up will permit identification of individual shop stewards.

TYPES OF ANSWERS

Many questions ask you to tick a box or fill in information. Some questions ask you to rank, i.e. to number in order of preference. This involves putting 1 against your most favoured answer, 2 against your next preferred answer etc. until you have exhausted your preferences. The example below is included in case you are unfamiliar with this type of question.

Example of Ranked Answer

What do you consider important in choosing a holiday resort? Please rank the following features in order of importance.

Sandy beaches	3	
Sunshine	2	
Exciting nightlife	4	
Entertainment in hotels	9	
Children's facilities	5	
Sports facilities	6	
Interesting sight-seeing	1	(most important)
Comfortable hotels	7	
Short transfer from airport	8	
Self-catering accommodation	10	(least important)

FURTHER COMMENTS

Space is often provided for you to make further comments after an answer. These comments are valuable because the answers offered may not adequately cover your opinions or there may be important factors which have been overlooked in the design of the questionnaire. So please make use of this space, where appropriate. If, however, you do not wish to add further comments or to answer all the questions, please do no abandon the questionnaire for this reason. Answers to most of the questionnaire are still infinitely more helpful than no replies.

RETURN OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Please return the questionnaire in the pre-paid reply envelope to the Polytechnic. The more replies sent in the more valuable and useful the study will be.

ECTION A ABOUT YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN NALGO

1 | | | |

How many years have you been a member of NALGO?

4 | | |

_____

How many years have you been a NALGO shop steward?

6 | |

_____

How many members do you represent as a shop steward?

8 | | | |

_____

How did you become elected as a shop steward?
Please rank upto three answers in order of preference.

11

I was asked by work colleagues to stand for election.	
No one else was prepared to do the job.	
I am interested in trade unionism.	
I thought I could do a better job than the existing shop steward.	
I decided to stand after a dispute at work.	
Other reason(s).	

If you have put a number in the "other reason(s)" box, please outline below what your reasons were.

_____

_____

_____

How would you define a good shop steward? Please rank the following statements in order of importance.

17

A good shop steward is someone who keeps their members well-informed.	
A good shop steward is someone who gives a lead to members.	
A good shop steward is someone who encourages their members to participate in NALGO.	
A good shop steward is someone who represents their members well at departmental level.	
A good shop steward is someone who is effective in sorting out day-to-day grievances.	

Are there any other characteristics of a good shop steward which you consider important? If so, please summarise them below.

22

_____

_____

_____

What are the good things about being a shop steward? Please rank in order of importance.

24

I get more information about NALGO.	
I find trade union work interesting.	
It makes me feel more confident.	
I enjoy sorting out people's problems.	
Successes in negotiating	
Going on trade union education courses	
Meeting people through the union	
I have learned a lot from being a shop steward.	
Other	

If other, please specify

_____

What are the bad things about being a shop steward? Please rank in order of importance.

33

Pressure from management	
The members expect too much of shop stewards.	
The responsibility can be worrying.	
It creates difficulties in doing one's job.	
Stress from excessive work	
Conflicts with family/social life	
Problems of understanding how NALGO works	
Reduces leisure time	
Other	

If other, please specify

_____

9 How many other NALGO shop stewards are there in your department? 42

_____

10 Do you hold any posts of responsibility in your departmental shop stewards' committee? 44

YES/NO

If YES, please specify

_____ 45

_____

1 Are you a member of the Branch Committee? 47

YES/NO

2 Do you hold any union posts, apart from shop steward? (Include membership of Branch Sub-committees in your answer if relevant) 48

YES/NO

If YES, which posts?

_____ 49

_____

3 Which union meetings do you attend in a typical month? Please tick

51

Constituency	
JCC	
Economic and General Purposes Committee	
Service Conditions Committee	
Branch Executive	
Equal Opportunities Committee	
Welfare Committee	
Education and Publicity Committee	
Other(s)	

If you have ticked the "Other(s)" category, please specify

_____

4 Approximately how many hours a week do you spend on NALGO work? (including time attending meetings) 60

_____

5 How many hours a week are you allowed off work for union duties? 62

_____

6 Do you encounter any difficulties in taking the time off work for union duties which you are formally entitled to take? 64

YES/NO

If YES, which is the source of most difficulty? Please rank 65

Pressure from managers	
Pressure from colleagues	
Pressure from service users	
Other factors	

Please specify which other factors make it difficult to take time off for union duties.

_____

_____

7 When is your NALGO work done? Please tick one answer 69

Mostly in work time	
About half in work time and half in own time	
Mostly in own time	

8 Have you been to NALGO Annual Conference as a delegate? 70

YES/NO

If YES, how many times have you been a delegate? 71

_____

Have you attended any trade union training courses? 72

YES/NO

If YES, which courses? 73

_____

_____

0 As a member of NALGO have you ever taken part in any form of industrial action?

YES/NO 75

If YES, please tick any of the following forms of industrial action which you have taken part in. (2)1

Overtime ban	
Work to rule	
No cover of vacant posts	
Ban on use of telephones	
Refusal to take on new duties	
Ban on talking to councillors	
Ban on use of cars for work purposes	
Half-day strike	
One-day strike	
Strike lasting under 1 week	
Strike lasting 1 week - 1 month	
Strike lasting 1 month - 3 months	
Strike lasting over 3 months	

Please outline any other forms of industrial action, not mentioned in the previous list, which you have also taken part in as a member of NALGO.

14

_____

_____

_____

1 What do you think NALGO's negotiating priorities should be?
Please rank in order of importance.

	15	16
Service conditions		
Higher pay		
Equal opportunities		
Shorter working week		
Job-sharing agreements		
Longer holidays		
Health and safety		
More time off for trade union work		
New technology agreements		
Pay increases for the lower paid		
Job security		
More opportunities for training and promotion		
Workplace nursery		
Other		

If other, please specify

_____

2 What obstacles do you encounter as a shop steward in representing your members' interests?
Please rank in order of importance.

	43
Apathy of members	
None at all	
Opposition from managers	
Hostility of councillors	
Size of membership	
Diversity of membership interests	
Cash limits imposed by central government	
Complexity of NALGO structure and rules	
Other	

If other, please specify

_____

3 What do you think are the good things about NALGO as a trade union? Please rank in order of importance and answer for both local (branch) and national levels of NALGO.

	Locally	Nationally
NALGO is effective in protecting service conditions		
NALGO provides a good information service to members		
NALGO is successful in defending jobs		
NALGO has an active and committed membership		
NALGO has good policies on equal rights		
NALGO campaigns actively to defend local government		
NALGO has a democratic structure		
NALGO is effective in protecting pay levels		

52 59

Any futher comments?

_____

_____

66

4 What do you think are the bad things about NALGO as a trade union? Please rank in order of importance and answer for both local (branch) and national levels.

	Locally	Nationally
NALGO is out of touch with ordinary members		
NALGO has failed to defend pay levels		
NALGO is too bureaucratic		
NALGO has failed to protect jobs		
NALGO is too political		
NALGO does not do enough on equal rights		
NALGO's membership is apathetic		
NALGO has failed to defend service conditions		
NALGO is ineffective as a trade union		

(3)1 10

Any further comments?

_____

_____

19

5 How democratic do you think NALGO is? Please tick the statements you agree with most.

	Locally	Nationally	21	26
The Executive effectively runs the union and decides policies.				
Members have the opportunity to decide policies, but often fail to participate.				
Members as a whole determine union policy.				
Members frustrate union policy by inactivity				
Active members run the union and decide policy				

Any further comments?

_____ 31

_____

6 Do you think NALGO should affiliate to the Labour Party? 33

YES/NO

SECTION B ABOUT YOUR WORK

7 What is you job title? 34

_____

8 Please describe briefly the main duties involved in your job? 36

_____

_____

_____

_____

Which Department of the Council do you work in? 38

_____

What is your grade? 40

_____

How many years have you worked for Sheffield City Council? 42

_____

2 How many years have you worked in local government in total? 44

3 From your work experience, how do you think the treatment of workers for the Council compares with the treatment of workers by other employers? Please tick one box for each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	46
effield City Council is a odel employer.						
effield City Council is an ployer no better and no orse than any other.						
effield City Council is a orse employer than many other ployers.						
effield City Council is a easonably good employer, ut not a model employer.						

Any further comments you wish to make? 50

4 Sheffield City Council has a "no redundancy" policy. What is your opinion of this? Please tick one box for each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	51
t gives workers a false ense of security.						
o one relies on it in the ong run.						
t makes employees more ommitted to their work.						
t is a waste of public money.						
ly trade union action an defend jobs.						
e Council uses temporary ontracts to avoid making ople redundant.						
e policy is an important enefit of working for effield City Council.						
e Council expects too much ob flexibility in return or the "no redundancy" policy.						

Any further comments?

59

35 What is your opinion of your job? Please indicate your view of the following statements by placing a tick in the relevant box.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	60
y job is interesting and varied						
I have too much work to do.						
In five years time I expect to ave a better job.						
aving any job is better than eing unemployed.						
y job is dull and repetitive.						
n five years time I expect to e in the same job.						
r job is socially useful and orthwhile.						
fear being unemployed in ive years time.						
ıe only reward is the money.						
am capable of doing more esponsible work than my job llows.						
y job allows me to develop r abilities.						
hope I will no longer be at ork in five years time.						

Any further comments?

72

6 Does your job help you to be effective as a shop steward? 73

by giving access to useful information	YES/NO
by allowing easy access to your members	YES/NO
giving you flexibility in organizing your time and work	YES/NO
helping you develop skills useful in union work, (e.g. public speaking, organizing meetings)	YES/NO
giving access to senior management	YES/NO

Any further comments? 78

37 Does your job conflict in any way with your work as a shop steward? (4)1

conflict of time demands	YES/NO	
threat to promotion prospects	YES/NO	
problem of building up a backlog of work	YES/NO	
inflexibility of work	YES/NO	
conflict of responsibilities/loyalties (wearing two hats)	YES/NO	

Any further comments?

_____ 6

ECTION C ABOUT YOURSELF OUTSIDE WORK

8 Are or were any of your relatives active trade unionists? 7

YES/NO

If YES, do you think this influenced your decision to become involved in the union? 8

YES/NO

9 Are or were any of your close friends active trade unionists? 9

YES/NO

If YES, do you think this influenced your decision to become involved in the union? 10

YES/NO

0 Do you regularly spend time socially with other union activists? 11

YES/NO

1 Are you a member of any of the following voluntary organizations? Please tick as appropriate.

Charity		12
Religious		
Campaign group		
Sports club		
Women's group		
Black group		
Youth group		
Hobby society		
Other		

If other, please specify

_____

Do you hold or have you ever held any elected posts or positions of responsibility in any of these organizations? 21

YES/NO

If YES, please give details (e.g. chair, secretary etc.)

_____ 22

_____

2 Are you a member of a political party? 23

YES/NO

If YES, which party? 24

_____

ECTION D ABOUT YOUR VIEWS AND OPINIONS

3 Do you read a daily newspaper? 25

YES/NO

If YES, which paper do you read? 26

_____

4 Did you vote in the last general election? 28

YES/NO

If YES, which party did you vote for? 29

_____

5 What are your opinions about the importance of local government?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	30
ɔcal government can do a lot o improve the quality of eople's lives.						
n the long-run local government annot carry our policies in ɔposition to central government						
ɪte-capping has reduced the ffectiveness of local government						
ɔcal councils should be able to ɪcrease the rates to improve ervices to the public.						
ɜnerally the public gets a good tandard of services from local overnment in Sheffield.						

46 The following questions concern the roles of women and men. Please tick one box for each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	35
The Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act have done uch to improve the position of women.						
All women should have the right to seek paid work.						
Men are oppressed by sex roles as much as women are.						
Nurseries should be available for all children under five.						
Positive action policies are needed to give women real equality at work.						
omen instinctively care for children better than men do.						
omen still experience discrimination and unequal treatment in many aspects of life.						
Women should have the right to choose whether to have an abortion.						
omen often fail to take up pportunities for equal representation in public life						
aws on social security and taxation should be changed to treat men and women equally.						

SECTION E ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND

7 Have you worked in any other areas of employment besides local government? 45

YES/NO

If YES, which areas of employment and which jobs?

_____

_____

8 At what age did you leave full-time education? 46

_____

49 Do you possess any of the following qualifications? Please tick.

48

City and guilds	
Secretarial qualifications	
CSEs	
O Levels	
A Levels	
CNC/OND	
HNC/HND	
Degree	
Postgraduate degree	
Professional qualification	
Other	

If "Other", please specify

_____

50 Are you studying for any further qualifications at present?
YES/NO

59

If YES, which qualifications?

_____

51 Are you receiving day-release from your employer or doing all your studying in your own time? Please tick.

60

Day-release	
All studying done in own time	

52 In which year were you born?

61

_____

53 Are you male or female?
MALE/FEMALE

65

54 What is your marital status?

66

Single	
Engaged	
Married	
Divorced	
Separated	
Widowed	
Co-habiting	

55 Do you have any children? 68

YES/NO

If YES, how many? 69

_____

And what are their ages? 70

_____

56 Do you have any responsibility for care of children or other dependent relatives? 71

YES/NO

If YES, approximately how many hours per week to these responsibilities take? Please tick. 72

under 5 hours	
5 - 10 hours	
10 - 15 hours	
15 - 20 hours	
over 20 hours	

57 What is your housing situation? Please tick. 73

Owner-occupier	
Council tenant	
Private sector tenant	
Housing association tenant	
Living with parents/relatives	
Living with friends	

58 How much time do you spend in a typical week doing housework? Please tick. 74

None	
Under 5 hours	
5 - 10 hours	
10 - 15 hours	
15 - 20 hours	
Over 20 hours	

59 Do you hold a full driving licence? 75

YES/NO

Do you hold a provisional driving licence?
YES/NO

60 What degree of access to a car do you have? Please tick. 76

Sole use	
Priority use	
Shared use	
Occasional use	
No access to a car	

61 How many years have you lived in the Sheffield area? 77

_____

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Follow-up interviews are going to be conducted with a sample of shop stewards. If you would be prepared to be interviewed in a few months time, please write your name in the box below. 78

NAME

DEPARTMENT

ORKPLACE ADDRESS

APPENDIX III - INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1 How does the shop stewards committee work in your department?
(Follow up questions)
How often does it meet?
What does the agenda cover?
Is there a chief shop steward?

2 What is the relation between your departmental shop stewards' committee and the branch?

3 Does the nature of the work in your department affect patterns of union organisation?
(Follow up questions)
Are there any jobs which make it particularly difficult to be a shop steward?
Are these jobs performed mainly be men or by women?

4 Do you think departments have distinct cultures?

5 How well do union facilities agreements work in your department?
(Follow up questions)
Is there a problem of cover?
When is your union work done?

6 Do you think women are under-represented in union office-holding?
(Follow up question)
Why do you think this is the case?

7 How successful do you think NALGO's attempts to increase women's participation in unions have been?

8 How much support do you think there is among your members for NALGO's equal rights policies?
(Follow up question)
What is their view of positive action?

9 What impact do you think the national strike of 1989 had on NALGO as a trade union?

10 What is your view of the proposed merger of NALGO with NUPE and COHSE?

11 What are your reasons for continuing in office as a shop steward/branch officer?
OR
Why did you decide to stand down from being a shop steward/ branch officer?

12 Is there anything else you consider important about shop stewards in NALGO, which I have not asked you about?